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Kate Doggett Boggs

THE

VISITING DAY.

A

N O V E L.

IN

TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

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THE
VISITING DAY.
A
NOVEL.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed for T. LOWNDES, No. 77
in *Fleet-Street.*
MDCCLXVIII.

1768

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THE VISITING DAY.

LETTER I.

To Miſs SOUTHERN.

COME, my dear Caroline, come to the friend who loves you, and leave thoſe inſolent wretches, who know not how to diſtinguiſh or pay a proper regard to merit.—Pluck up your ſpirit, child, nor let their ſaucy airs affect you.—I truſt the time will come, when my friend ſhall

triumph in her turn, and the broad ſhame ſhall ſtare them in the face, for their former treatment. I have a ſtrong pre-ſentiment, that, cloudy as your proſpects have hitherto been, the ſunſhine of proſperity will yet break forth, and chear your future days.—It muſt, for heaven beſtows not ſuch gifts as you poſſeſs in vain.—Nay, my ſhy girl, tho' you are ſo modeſtly ſilent, do you think the fame of your conqueſt has not reached me? Ought I not to chide you for your reſerve?—What! treat your boſom friend, and, as I imagined, your unlimited confident, in this manner!—Expect my heavieſt diſpleaſure, if your next does not bring me a full and particular account of—of—Can you gueſs who I mean?—Ah, a bluſh! a ſmile!—Let me alone for penetration.——Lord, my dear, did you think I ſhould not find you out?——Why, child, in ſpite of your pretty, little, demure

VMW

mure airs, I have known this important ſecret an age—nay, I knew, judging by myſelf, you was dying to diſcloſe it; but I was determined to puniſh you, for daring to limit your confidence, ſince mine to you is unbounded.——I forgive you, however (admire my goodneſs!) as I know it proceeds from that ſweet maideniſh baſhfulneſs, for which my Caroline is ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed. Yet how, in the name of fortune, child, did you think our attachment was to ſubſiſt, without mutually communicating thoſe pretty little ſecrets, which are the very life and ſpirit of female friendſhip?—Ah, my dear! let me not depreciate that moſt noble paſſion in my levity; ours at leaſt, is, I truſt, built on a more laſting, a more ſolid foundation.

No time nor charm ſhall ever ſhake my firm, my fixed regard for thee.—Give

me an opportunity, then, of rejoicing at your good fortune, as I have hitherto ſympathized in your uneaſineſſes.—I am going to talk to you with all imaginable gravity.—They aſſure me, nay, I have it from unqueſtionable authority, namely, from a couple of ſpinſters, neither young nor handſome, who are ſeldom guilty of exaggeration in affairs of this nature, that Mr. Bladon is deeply ſmitten with your charms; and if thoſe hopeleſs virgins acknowledge ſo much, one may reaſonably conclude you are on the brink of matrimony.——I have heard a great character of the man too, and, what I had almoſt ſaid is ſtill better, of his fortune,——Now, child, I charge you, as you value my favour, let not this opportunity of triumphing over your enemies eſcape.——I know you are delicate in your choice almoſt to a fault; nor would I adviſe you to marry

marry a creature who is abſolutely diſagreeable to you; but, at the ſame time, pay not too much regard to our girliſh romantic idea of love, if you can eſteem the man: If you have not a downright averſion, take him, my dear.—Matrimony, at beſt, is a lottery; after all our precaution, 'tis a thouſand to one but we draw a blank. Pay a proper regard to the main chance; for one thing is certain, viz. "'tis "beſt repenting in a coach and ſix."

You ſtare,—you rub your eyes,—you read this ſagacious paragraph over again.—Good heavens, you cry! Is it poſſible thoſe indelicate common-place ſentiments ſhould be my Sophy's? ſentiments ſo different from thoſe I have heard her profeſs!—Dear creature! well may you ſtare, well may you be amazed.——Now, can you gueſs where I pickt them up?—You

have only to ſuppoſe Kitty, and my lady-ſhip ſeated at work, and mama with her ſpecs on, reading us a morning lecture,—when behold the myſtery is unravelled.—'Tis only a ſpecimen of my good mother's elocution, addreſſed to your friend, by way of perſuading her to a certain match, which, I could have whiſpered in her ear, will never take place.——But let that paſs,—this ſame girliſh romantic idea of love, as ſhe calls it, will, I much fear, for ſome years longer at leaſt, keep poſſeſſion of me, in ſpite of all her pains.—Ah! what would life be, without the happy faculty of embelliſhing, by our imaginations, the few, very few pleaſures it affords!—I do not envy thoſe prudent literal ſouls, who ſee every thing in what is called a juſt, a reaſonable light. I for my part ſhould die with diſguſt and ennui, were it not for deluſive hopes, imaginary fears, and the heighten-

heightening which a lively imagination gives to every joy. It is true, we are more ſubject to diſappointments than thoſe mighty reaſonable people; as they expect little, we, on the contrary, a great deal. But, is there not an infinite deal of happineſs even in thoſe raiſed, tho' chimerical expectations?—True, the diſappointment is in proportion; yet would I not change diſpoſitions with thoſe drowſy mortals, who doze their lives away in a dead, ſtupid, and inactive calm.——

But where am I rambling!—What is all this to Bladon!—By all accounts, you can have no objections to him;—young, handſome, rich;—your affections, or you have much deceived me, diſengaged.—Woe be to you, if you have deceived me in ſo material a point; and yet, now I recollect ſome ſuſpicious circumſtances,—I half ſuſ-

pect.—Ah, Caroline! if you have, I again repeat, Woe be to ye!—But I ſuſpend my judgment till your next, when I expect a faithful tranſcript of your heart; or, what will be a thouſand times more welcome to me, inſtead of a letter, bring me that dear heart yourſelf, and let me examine it.—Little examination will it need, to ſee all that paſſes there;—that ſweet, expreſſive, open countenance of thine, can ill conceal its feelings and emotions.—Come then, my dear, you may bring your lover in your hand. Leave a place unworthy of your preſence, leave the cenſorious inſulting multitude, and taſte with me the more genuine innocent pleaſures of the country.—Mama will improve you, by her lectures on prudence and notability; Kitty will ramble with you———

" ——— far away,
" Where the nibbling flocks do ſtray,
" O'er

" O'er the mountain's barren breaſt,
" Where labouring clouds do often reſt.
" O'er the meads with daiſies py'd,
" Shallow brooks, and rivers wide."

And what ſhall I do?—O, ten thouſand things,——among the reſt, love you with my whole ſoul. Adieu.

SOPHY WESTBROOK.

Kind reſpects to your mama.

LETTER II.

To Miſs WESTBROOK.

YES, my dear friend, Mr. Bladon did indeed honour me with his addreſſes. Yet accuſe me not of reſerve,—'twas to me a diſagreeable ſubject.—I have ſuffered too much for his partiality.—You aſk a full and particular account of him.—In few words, my dear, he is handſome, ſenſible, and engaging,—a man, upon the whole, that few women could or would object to. —Yet I refuſed him.—Strange! after this acknowledgement of his merit!—I to whom his addreſſes did honour! inferior to him in birth! without fortune, without friends, —I refuſe him!——How ſhall I vindicate myſelf from the charge of folly and im-

pru-

prudence?—I need not attempt it.—All the world condemn me;—but do you, my friend, judge more favourably of your ill-fated Caroline.—If you aſk why I acted in ſo unaccountable a manner, I can only anſwer, that it was not in my power to do otherwiſe.—This, I truſt, will ſatisfy my kind, my partial Sophy, tho' it will not content others.—I am far from being indifferent about the world's opinion; but I was not born to poſſeſs its friendſhip:—If they will cenſure, in ſpite of all the precaution I take to prevent giving them cauſe, why then, my dear, they muſt cenſure, and I muſt endeavour to be patient.

This marriage, had it been in my power or inclination to have accepted it, would indeed have delivered me from a very diſagreeable ſituation; yet nothing gives me ſo much uneaſineſs, as mama's being of-

fended at my refuſal.—How cruel! how embarraſſing is my ſituation!—I am not at liberty to give her thoſe reaſons which might vindicate my conduct.

Ah, Sophy, you accuſe me of reſerve! wou'd to heaven——but I dare not, muſt not,—yet never heart glowed with a more fervent friendſhip.—You wiſh to examine that heart.—I return you my moſt grateful thanks for your obliging invitation.—O that it were in my power to accept it!—at preſent it is not. But I live in hopes that it will not be long ere I am ſuffered to enjoy the happineſs of your dear ſociety. I taſte nothing here that deſerves that name, though there are not wanting ſome who profeſs a friendſhip for me, without having ſo much as an idea what true friendſhip means.

Mrs.

Mrs. Derby's aguiſh attachment, cold and hot by turns, ſubjects me to perpetual uneaſineſs; yet I know not how to break with her. I ſhould be branded with the name of the moſt odious ingratitude; for her general character is that of the beſt woman in the world, the moſt generous creature breathing. "She has indeed, "they cry, too much feeling, too much "ſenſibility for her peace."——Ah! how little do I diſcover thoſe vaunted perfections!——Under the maſk of friendſhip, ſhe gives a thouſand mortifying wounds to the delicate mind.——Servilely fawning to her ſuperiors, to her inferiors ſhe is as inſolently compaſſionate.—I find myſelf a ſlave to her caprice, without being able to break my chains, as ſhe has taught every one to believe I am under the higheſt obligations to her.——In what, I wonder!——Her countenance, inſtead of doing

doing me ſervice, has ſet my ſituation in a more deſpicable light than it would otherwiſe have appeared. ——— She makes every one a confident of my circumſtances, by way of procuring me friends, as ſhe pretends; but there is a certain way of telling thoſe things which muſt ever fruſtrate that purpoſe. Suppoſing it was really her intention, of this truth I have daily but too many mortifying proofs, ſince nothing can equal the inſolent treatment I receive.——Oh! my friend, great reaſon has your Caroline to be ſick of this vain world!——Forgive me!—I ought not to write to you, while in this humour.—Why am I not endued with more philoſophy?

A recent mortification has made a too deep impreſſion on my ſpirits,—I ought to be more humble—'tis a grace for which

which I daily put up the moſt fervent petitions to Heaven.——May the contempt, the pride of others, which I have not yet learned to ſubmit to as I ought, be ſanctified to that end!—I truſt it will!—It muſt be owned they take indefatigable pains to produce that effect.

Adieu.—Are you not ſick of my correſpondence,—always in the complaining ſtrain?—Yet, if you knew all, you would pardon me; but even the conſolation of unlimited confidence is denied me.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To the ſame.

OH! my true, my diſintereſted friend! what genuine ſatisfaction will you taſte in hearing of my good fortune!—unexpected by you, and by myſelf deſpaired of!

Before I enter into particulars, let me once more entreat your forgiveneſs, for having ſo long concealed an important ſecret from you. How often has it been ready to eſcape me! how often has the generous openneſs of your heart tempted mine to overflow! and how painful to me was the cruel reſtraint impoſed on me!

Bound by the moſt ſolemn vows, my confidence in you, which by my own inclination

clination would have known no bounds, was ſo limited, that I could not enjoy half the pleaſure I might otherwiſe have experienced from our mutual friendſhip:—At laſt, however, thank heaven, I am at liberty to communicate an event, hitherto regarded as the moſt unfortunate of my life; but now, I truſt, the moſt happy.

I ſaid in my laſt, "great reaſon has your "friend to be ſick of this vain world."—Ah! pray heaven, I may not now be but too well reconciled to it, in ſpite of all its faults!—I have reaſon, with great fervour, to put up that petition in our excellent Liturgy,—"In all times of our wealth, "good Lord deliver me!"—for tho' I with tolerable fortitude ſupported the ſtrokes of adverſity, to which my paſt life has been ſubject, I know not how I ſhall acquit myſelf in proſperity.—Pray for me, my friend, that I may be kept properly humble!

Now

Now recollect the characters of the people amongſt whom I reſide, that you may be better able to form an idea of their aſtoniſhment at the ſcene I am going to relate, and their behaviour on the occaſion.

Yeſterday I received the following note from Mrs. Derby:

" My dear,

" I am to have a great deal of company " this afternoon. You muſt come, and " make tea for me.—Perhaps I ſhall want " you at one of the card-tables; but at " any rate come, for I have ſomething for " you to do.

" Yours,

" M. DERBY."

To

To this polite invitation, I returned for anſwer, that I would do myſelf the honour to attend her; and accordingly, at the proper hour, went to her houſe; got admittance; but the ſervants, knowing I was a perſon of no conſequence, left me to introduce myſelf.—I entered the drawing-room—moſt of the company were already aſſembled—a very brilliant circle! They honour'd me with a gracious nod; and Mrs. Derby pointed to a chair at a convenient diſtance from the reſt, where I placed myſelf, ſatisfied with the loweſt ſeat, remembering the text, "Thoſe that humble "themſelves ſhall be exalted."—Yet little did I think it was going ſo ſoon to be literally verified.

The tea equipage was placed before me. Inſpired by that, if one may judge by the effects attributed to it, not very harmleſs liquor,

liquor, ſcandal—but couched in compaſſionate terms—began to take place of a moſt woeful dearth of converſation, which prevailed on my firſt entrance. Many tales were told, to the diſadvantage of others—but told merely to ſhew how much they pitied their imprudence, their indiſcretion—and, as I would charitably hope, as a warning to others.—All Mrs. Derby's ſtories ended with—"How I pity the poor wretches!—I "really have too much ſenſibility—I feel "too much for others, ever to be happy!"

Such ſubjects once introduced, there was no great fear that the converſation would ſoon flag; but cards, next to ſcandal the favourite amuſement of the ladies, were now brought in.—Up they ſtarted, as eager to engage as if the amuſement had had all the charms of novelty to recommend it.—What a bewitching thing

muſt

muſt this gaming be to thoſe who have a taſte for it!—and who now-a-days is ſo unfaſhionable as not to be of that number?——

I ſhall never forget a pious old lady, a relation, whom my mother and I went to viſit, being told ſhe was at the point of death, and who my father had juſt been praying by. I entered her apartment with that ſolemnity of countenance one naturally aſſumes, when expecting to be witneſs to a ſcene ſo mournful.—But judge of my ſurprize, when I beheld the poor emaciated creature bolſtered up in her bed, with a ſnug little party of friends, taking a laſt farewel of dear enchanting quadrille, and delightedly eyeing through her ſpectacles, ſpadille, manille, and baſto, which, at that moment, with uncommon good luck,

ſhe

ſhe held in her hand.—I make no comments—pardon this digreſſion.

When the parties were forming, my aſſiſtance was found neceſſary.—I was deſired—or rather ordered—to make one, and accordingly took my ſeat.——I was attentive—not from any pleaſure I have in the game—for cards are, of all things, my averſion; but I looked upon it as my duty, leſt others ſhould ſuffer by my negligence. —Juſt as one of the ladies and I were on the point of winning a vole, and her every faculty engroſſed by that delightful hope, enters a ſervant, and approaching me with unaccuſtomed reſpect—"A "letter for your Ladyſhip,"—bowing—"the man waits below."—"For me!"—and down dropt the cards.—"Fidle fadle!" cried my partner, "What has ſhe to do "with

" with letters now?—I hope at leaſt you
" will not be ſo rude as to read it."—

" Your Ladyſhip!" cried another, laughing, " did you mind how cordially ſhe
" took the compliment?"—

" If you, Madam," ſaid the man, looking at me, " are Lady Somerville, as I
" was juſt now informed, I have made no
" miſtake."

" Lady Somerville!" exclaimed I, ſtarting up. " Good heavens! what do I hear!
" Give me the letter—it is indeed for me.
" My God! what can this mean?"

I looked at the direction—well did I know the dear hand—with trembling emotion I opened it.—Oh, my friend, judge of my tranſports, on reading the delightful

ful contents—but I forget, all this is a myſtery to you—have patience!—you ſhall now know every event of my paſt life.

Let me lead to that relation.—Mrs. Derby had cut out—ſeeing me read the letter, amazed at my rudeneſs, came to chide me for it—but I was no longer in a condition to profit by her rebuke. Surprize and joy overcame my ſenſes; and I ſunk back in my chair, almoſt fainting.—One of the ladies condeſcended to apply her ſalts—I recovered.

"This is a very unaccountable beha-
"viour of yours," ſaid Mrs. Derby; "I
"am quite aſhamed of you——ſee what
"trouble and confuſion you have cauſed.
"If you found yourſelf ill, why did
"you not retire?—I did not think you
"could have ſo far forgot yourſelf; but I
"ſhall

" ſhall know better another time how
" to treat people of your rank.——
" I beg your pardon, Ladies, this is
" pretty entertainment for you!"

" You ſay, Madam," returned I, a little diſdainfully, " you ſhall for the " future know better how to treat " people of my rank!—I hope you " will; for, upon my word, hitherto it " has not been quite ſo polite, as might " have been expected from one who " pretends to good breeding.—It is true " you were ignorant of my quality—but " a perſon of true generoſity would " treat every one they converſe with, " with affability and good manners.— " However, I ſhall no longer be ſub- " jected to mortifying inſults—that let- " ter, Madam, is from my huſband,"

preſenting it to her; "you are at li-
"berty to read it."

She coloured——"Your huſband!
"Why, is it poſſible you ſhould be
"married?"——

"Poſſible!" repeated I, ſmiling.
"Every one does not eſtimate my worth
"by your judgement—Lord Somerville
"diſdains not to call me his; for ſome
"time, it was neceſſary to conceal our
"marriage—but I am now at liberty to
"divulge the ſecret—You will find,
"Madam, by his letter," purſued I,
"that I may ſoon expect him at D—."

How the company ſtared!—for by this time they were all gathered round me.—The ſervant was ſtill in the room.

"Who

" Who brought this letter?" ſaid I. " His Lordſhip's gentleman, my Lady," with a low bow; " he waits to ſpeak " with your Ladyſhip."

I aroſe.——" If agreeable to you," ſaid Mrs. Derby, ſtammering, and in great confuſion, " I'll order him to be " called up."

" If you pleaſe, Madam," was my anſwer.

In a few moments enters Smith—I could have embraced the honeſt fellow, for being the meſſenger of ſuch welcome news.—Addreſſing me with the utmoſt reſpect—" My Lord ſent me off expreſs " with the letter you have received.—I " have been at Mrs. Southern's—when,

" enquiring for your Ladyſhip, as I was
" ordered, by the name of Miſs Southern,
" the ſervant told me you was here.—
" I have only to add, that his Lordſhip
" told me I was to wait farther orders
" from your Ladyſhip."

" Return to Mrs. Southern," ſaid I;
" and let mama know I ſhall be with
" her in leſs than a quarter of an hour.
" ——Yet ſtay—get me a chair, I will
" go immediately."

Mrs. Derby had by this time read part of my Lord's letter——" I beg it
" as a particular favour," cried ſhe,
" that you will not leave us yet.—I
" have a thouſand apologies to make.
" But who could have gueſſed—" She bluſhed—pauſed—and ſeemed at a loſs what

what to ſay.——Mean woman!—there would have been no need for apologies, had ſhe behaved to me as every generous good heart would have done in her ſituation.—You would have laughed, my dear Sophy, had you ſeen with what awe my preſence, late ſo inſignificant, now ſtruck the cringing groupe—vying with each other who ſhould be moſt ſervilely complaiſant and aſſiduous.

My Lord deſires me, in his letter, as mama's is too ſmall, to procure a houſe fit for his reception.—I mentioned this.——Every mouth opened at once—— "Their's was much at my Ladyſhip's "ſervice, till I could provide myſelf "with one more commodious."—Would this offer have been me a few days ago?

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—O grandeur! O riches!—how powerful are thy attractions!

Mrs. Derby inſiſted more ſtrenuouſly than the reſt, that I ſhould make her's my home.——In ſhort, I had inſtantly more friends, and thoſe violent ones too, than I knew what to do with.——At length, however, curioſity prevailed over their civility; and, from ſome pretty broad hints, I found they were dying to know the hiſtory of my marriage.

As it was neceſſary to remove all doubts, which they might entertain in regard to its reality, I promiſed next morning to gratify their curioſity; but, at that time, nothing ſhould detain me from my dear mother, ſince my joy muſt

ever

ever be imperfect, till ſhe become a ſharer in it.

I took my leave, half a hundred of them officiouſly attending me to the door.

To deſcribe my mother's tranſports, when informed of this extraordinary event, of which ſhe was as ignorant as the reſt of the world, is impoſſible.—Never did your Caroline paſs ſo delightful an evening; or a night, tho' ſleepleſs, ſo full of pleaſing reflections on my approaching happineſs.——But you will be better able to judge of my joy, when you know the miſery I have ſuffered.

Excuſe me at preſent—I muſt defer the relation till my next——I am now

going to ſee a houſe they have recommended to me. Adieu, my beſt love———

Yours, in all conditions,

CAROLINE.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

To the ſame.

IN the firſt place, my dear friend, I muſt earneſtly requeſt the favour of your company, and that immediately. I am ſure your good mama will not refuſe me. You are but one day's journey from hence. Come, my deareſt love. I can do nothing to the purpoſe without you——Come, and ſupport my ſpirits; they now begin to flag—exhauſted with the violence of my emotions.

Oh! Sophy, I have a thouſand fears —but I will not indulge them—yet who knows how much my perſon may be al-

tered for the worſe, during three tedious years of ſorrow?—Ah! will the lord of my heart return to me with all the fervour of his firſt love?—if he ſhould regret his choice—if he ſhould look upon me as the obſtacle to thoſe aſpiring hopes he was born to—what will then become of your unfortunate Caroline?

You will chide me for this weakneſs—but, is it not natural?——Yet he is generous;—he once entertained for me the moſt ardent paſſion—and does he not ſtill honour me with his affection?—He does—his dear letter breathes the ſoul of love—he is tranſported at the thoughts of being at laſt permitted to raiſe me from obſcurity.——With what delight does he dwell on our happy meeting!—in what lively colours paint the raptures

the

the bare idea of it awakens in his conſtant heart!

Oh! Sophy, it ſhall be my unremitted ſtudy to render myſelf worthy his eſteem, and the continuance of his high-prized love.——May heaven govern my every action, and enable me faithfully and prudently to diſcharge the important duties of a wife and mother.

Excuſe me, my dear friend; I ought not thus to trifle with your (no doubt) high-raiſed curioſity.——Take then, as briefly as I can, the hiſtory of my, till now, unfortunate paſſion.

Soon after my father's death, a lady, who had a real friendſhip for our family—when my mother's grief was a

little abated—prevailed on her (greatly contrary to my inclination, for I could not bear the thoughts of leaving her) to let me accompany her into the country, where ſhe did not propoſe ſtaying above two months, as the ſummer was almoſt over.

She had a moſt noble houſe, and every thing which affluence could bring to render life agreeable; yet ſhe was not happy; a naturally perverſe temper—tho' at bottom a good kind of woman—ſoured all her enjoyments.

I had every day reaſon to wiſh my tedious viſit at an end, tho' I really believe ſhe had all the friendſhip for me ſhe was capable of; but, in ſpite of that, had ſhe been my enemy, ſhe could not

not have taken more pains to torment me——I am naturally extremely fond of the country; but a temper like her's muſt render every place diſagreeable.

I continually meditated ſome pretence for leaving her, when an event, which I am going to relate, gave a new turn to my thoughts—and ſoon reconciled me to Woodhill.

One night, when we were juſt ſitting down to ſupper, a ſervant entered, and informed his Lady, that a Gentleman had, almoſt at her gate, been flung from his horſe, by which accident he had unfortunately broke his arm;—that he had ſent one of his domeſtics, to intreat her permiſſion to be carried into her houſe, till he could procure aſſiſtance, it being impoſ-

impoſſible, in that condition, to proceed on his journey.

Mrs. Ballaſton was not inſenſible to the feelings of humanity.—His requeſt was inſtantly complied with;—and the ſtranger, ſupported by two ſervants in rich liveries, was brought in.

Before I ſaw him, I felt for him the moſt tender compaſſion;—but ah! my dear, his preſence ſoon cauſed far different emotions——I will not attempt to deſcribe him. Let it ſuffice, that to me he appeared the moſt amiable man I ever beheld—I truſt it will not be long ere you ſee him, and you may then judge if I was partial.

To avoid being tedious—I ſhall only ſay, that I ſoon found, to my inexpreſſible ſatisfaction, your friend had the happineſs of being equally agreeable to him—my heart was loſt ere I ſuſpected myſelf in the leaſt danger.

A novice in affairs of this nature—— ere I well knew my malady, I found it irremediable——It was not till he declared his paſſion, that I found my heart had long been irrecoverably his.

More than a fortnight paſſed ere he was in a condition to leave us;——nor would he then have acknowledged himſelf ſo, had not the ſurgeons pronounced him perfectly cured.

Our

Our acquaintance, however, did not end here, tho', from prudent motives, I diſcouraged all farther intimacy—for what could I hope, after being informed of his quality, from ſuch an indiſcreet attachment?

His father was living—and, as he himſelf owned, one of the moſt ambitious men in England—but, my dear, who ever, when under the influence of a powerful and infatuating paſſion, is capable of paying a due attention to the cool counſels of reaſon?

He repeatedly wrote to me—in ſhort, from one ſtep to another, after being perſuaded to anſwer his letters—I was in the end likewiſe prevailed on to give him a private meeting.

Having

Having advanced thus far, a ſecond, a third, was but too eaſily obtained.—I had the greateſt dependence on his honour.—He continually talked to me of marriage; but confeſſed, he had no hopes of obtaining his father's conſent.

My dear Sophy, you will, and may but too juſtly, condemn my imprudence! ——Alas! I was young, inexperienced, and in love.—Severely have I been puniſhed for my indiſcretion!

He never ceaſed importuning me—and ah! with what perſuaſive eloquence!——till I gave my conſent to a private marriage. Fain would I have prevailed on him to ſuffer me at leaſt to make a confident of my mother, whoſe prudence I had no reaſon to doubt.

But

But he convinced me——how eaſily does a lover convince one!——that it would be the higheſt indiſcretion—— "Our marriage," he ſaid, "need not "long be kept ſecret. He would throw "himſelf at his father's feet the mo- "ment it was concluded, to implore his "forgiveneſs—he was a man of ſenſe, "and, in ſome reſpects, an affectionate "parent——he would, he made no "doubt, pardon him, when he found "there was no remedy."

He added a great many flattering encomiums on my merit and charms; which, he was perſuaded, could not fail to move him in my favour.

In ſhort, my friend, under pretence of viſiting a young lady, my ſchool-fellow,

fellow, who, I pretended, had wrote for me, I obtained Mrs. Ballaſton's permiſſion to attend her.—She entertained not the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of the real cauſe of my journey, as ſhe knew nothing of my Lord's paſſion for me.

Under this pretence, I ſay, I accompanied my Lord to Scotland, where we were married.—We ſtaid there three or four days.

Our parting was inexpreſſibly moving —I had a ſad foreboding of the misfortunes which would be the conſequences of a union ſo imprudent.

All his tender aſſiduities, and a thouſand vows of everlaſting love, could not diſpel the ſettled melancholy that from

from that moment took poſſeſſion of my heart.

I returned to Mrs. Ballaſton's, in a ſituation of mind not eaſily to be deſcribed—but which you may eaſily imagine—and which, to a perſon endued with any ſhare of virtue, will ever be the conſequence of deviating from their duty.

My Lord went to town, firmly reſolved to acquaint his father with the tranſaction.—Judge how impatient I was for a letter—a letter on the contents of which my future happineſs or miſery depended.

For more than a week was I kept in the moſt dreadful ſuſpence.——No lan-

guage

guage can expreſs what I ſuffered.—At laſt a ſervant, whom I did not know, brought me a ſhort note. It contained only theſe words:——"If you wiſh to "hear news of Lord Somerville, you "muſt follow the bearer, who will con-"duct you to him."

The paper dropt from my hand, and I almoſt fainted.——What could this mean? I ſtaid not, however, to enquire——but inſtantly ſet out with the meſſenger, who led me to a genteel-looking houſe, about half a mile from my friend's.

With trembling emotions I entered; and, on aſking for Lord Somerville, was ſhewn into a parlour, where ſat an elderly gentleman, of majeſtic appear-

ance,

ance, but who was an abſolute ſtranger to me.

In great confuſion, and no leſs terror, I was going to retire;——but he took my hand, and, faſtening the door, led me to a ſeat.

"Compoſe yourſelf," ſaid he, drawing a chair near me; "if I find you "capable of liſtening to reaſon, I will "prove myſelf your friend."——

"My friend!" cried I, faultering, "who are you, Sir?"

"The father of that undutiful im-"prudent youth, who——"

" Oh! Heaven!" exclaimed I, interrupting him—" then I am ruined!"—I burſt into tears.

" You are indeed ruined," returned he, in a reſolute tone, " if you re-
" fuſe to liſten to my counſel.—Dry up
" your tears," continued he;" " and
" prepare to hear me with patience.—
" I will ſpare my reproaches, tho' you
" juſtly merit them, for drawing my ſon
" into a marriage ſo imprudent—a mar-
" riage, however, which can eaſily
" be annulled.——You did not conſider
" that he is not of age, and, conſe-
" quently, could not legally enter into
" ſuch an engagement. You muſt not
" flatter yourſelf that he will ever ac-
" knowledge you as his wife."

" And

" And does he then abandon me?" cried I—" O perjured and ungrateful!" —I could add no more—for a few moments I was happily inſenſible of my wretchedneſs.

" No," ſaid he, when I recovered; " I ſcorn a falſhood. The boy would " perſiſt in his folly; but I have put it " out of his power to make himſelf ri- " diculous.—He is by this time too far " diſtant to oppoſe my meaſures; nor " will he ever be permitted to return, " till you reſign your imaginary right. " Tell me," continued he, taking my hand, " do you really love him, or was " you actuated by ambition in what you " have done?"

" Do I love him?"—repeated I, with fervor, raiſing my ſtreaming eyes——

" Yes, I call Heaven to witneſs, that I
" love him more than life."

" You will then," returned he, " be
" ſtudious of his welfare.—Now hear
" me with attention—I have ſent him
" abroad—I have intercepted the let-
" ter he wrote to you on his depar-
" ture.—You find I deal openly and
" ingenuouſly with you.—While I live,
" he never ſhall own you as his wife—
" nay, you are not ſo in reality; and,
" indeed, I hope, ere long, he will
" himſelf be ſenſible of his indiſcretion.
" —Now I offer you a handſome provi-
" ſion for life, if you will conſent to
" give up your ridiculous claim.——I
" could take meaſures to compel you;
" but I would be tender of your repu-
" tation.—— You had beſt agree to

" my propoſal; for, believe me, you
" will only expoſe yourſelf, by attempt-
" ing to aſſert your imaginary right."

" Give up my claim to him!" cried I, with ſpirit—" no, I am his true, his
" lawful wife—and no power on earth
" ſhall tempt me to——"

" Softly!" interrupted he,—" you
" know both his fate and yours depends
" on me;——and here I ſwear, if you
" will not take the moſt ſolemn oath
" never to divulge the ſecret of your
" marriage to any living ſoul; I ſwear,
" I ſay, that I will inſtantly diſinherit—
" and give him up to beggary and ruin:
" —So conſider well, if you have any
" true regard for him, what you are
" about."

" If

" If concealing my marriage," cried I, weeping, " will ſatisfy your cruelty, " rather than he ſhould ſuffer, who is " as dear to me as my own ſoul, I will " ſwear to that; nay farther, I will " never claim him as my huſband, but " generouſly depend on his conſtancy " and honour;—convinced he will one " one day do me juſtice——or, if he " ſhould be ſo baſe as to abandon me, " I may die with grief; but I ſhall have " the leſs cauſe to regret a wretch ſo " unworthy——yes, ſpite of his rank, " unworthy of a woman of virtue. By " Heaven's aſſiſtance, I will do my " duty; and may that righteous Hea- " ven diſpoſe of me as it ſees fit!"

Lord B. ſpite of his haughtineſs, ſeemed a good deal affected. " I find

" you are not incapable of generoſity," ſaid he; " you ſhall be no loſer by it. " —If I had another ſon—if my eldeſt " only could form an alliance ſuitable " to his rank—I think I could almoſt " be prevailed on—you are ſo amiable " both in perſon and manner—to re- " ceive you as my daughter!—But my " only ſon!—It muſt not—cannot be!— " I am really, Madam, concerned at " your misfortune, and ſincerely offer " you my friendſhip. Only confirm to " me what you have agreed to; and, to " the utmoſt of my power, I promiſe " to ſerve you."

" I want not your friendſhip," returned I, a little diſdainfully; " I deſpiſe " your fortune, as much, perhaps, as " you do my poverty. If nothing but

" my

" my compliance with your unreaſon-
" able demand can ſave your ſon from
" being diſinherited, I ſwear by Heaven
" never to divulge the ſecret of our
" marriage; never to claim my huſband
" till he thinks fit to own me as his
" wife—but ſtill I know myſelf to be
" ſuch."

" You have done all I at preſent de-
" ſire," interrupted he. —— " You re-
" ject my friendſhip—but be aſſured I
" will be your friend, notwithſtanding
" that rejection."

My ignorance—my natural timidity,—dear Sophy, could alone excuſe a proceeding ſo extraordinary as that I was drawn into.—Oh! what miſery has it ſince coſt me on reflection.—But I endeavoured

deavoured to conſole myſelf—under a firm perſuaſion that Lord Somerville would one day do me juſtice.—I am not deceived. Heaven has at length amply rewarded me for all my ſufferings.

Lord B. renewed his offers of ſervice —but I peremptorily refuſed to ſubmit to any obligation from him, who had ſo cruelly proved himſelf my enemy.

We parted, and I returned to Mrs. Ballaſton's more dead than alive.—— Grief, doubly violent for its concealment —preyed on my ſpirits.—I was ſeized with a dangerous fever, which I believe would ſoon have put a period to all my afflictions, had I not ſeaſonably received a moſt affectionate letter from my dear Lord.

He

He found means to ſend it by a private hand. All his motions were ſtrictly watched; and he doubted not but letters by any public conveyance would be intercepted by his cruel father. He repeatedly vowed eternal conſtancy; and movingly did he deſcribe the miſery he ſuffered from our ſeparation. But he charged me, in the moſt endearing manner, to keep up my ſpirits; aſſuring me, that, though his ruin ſhould be the conſequence, he would, on his return to England, publicly acknowledge me as his wife.—He was then at Paris, from whence he promiſed to write to me by every favourable opportunity.

How did this dear letter revive my drooping heart! From that moment I began to recover.

Mrs. Ballaſton had been extremely kind during my illneſs.—As ſoon as I was in a condition to travel, we returned to town.

My mother was ſhocked, and ſurprized to ſee me ſo much altered. Oh! Sophy, how did I long to pour out my grief into her ſympathizing boſom!—— and how did the being denied that conſolation augment it!

My indiſpoſition continued—alas! it was no longer a fever! I now found myſelf in the condition I ſo much feared, and looked forward to with ſuch apprehenſion. What now was to be done?—there was nobody to whom I durſt—nay was at liberty—to truſt the fatal ſecret. —At length, I determined to make uſe of

of the ſame pretence to my mother, that I had before done to Mrs. Ballaſton, for my intended abſence—namely, a pretended invitation from the young Lady before-mentioned.

My mother had often heard me ſpeak of her—but had never ſeen or had the leaſt acquaintance with either her or her family.——This favoured my purpoſe; and, as ſhe lived at a conſiderable diſtance from town, I ſtood the leſs chance of being diſcovered—not, you may believe, that I intended to go there—but it was no difficult matter to make people believe that I intended it.

My only dilemma was to know how to manage my mother's writing—for how was ſhe to direct, without diſcovering that I had deceived her?

This, indeed, appeared an almoſt inſurmountable difficulty.——At length, however, I hit upon an expedient.——After obtaining her permiſſion to accept my friend's pretended invitation (indeed ſhe aſſented to it with joy, hoping the country air would be of benefit to my health), I told her I ſhould not expect the favour of a letter from her, till ſhe had received one from me.

To be ſhort, with a heavy heart, I took leave of this dear, this affectionate parent——Alas! I knew not that we ſhould ever meet again.—My condition filled me with the moſt dreadful apprehenſion.—I ſet off then in the ſtage, and arrived ſafe at W. without knowing a ſingle ſoul in the town, or where to go to. In what a miſerable and forlorn ſituation was your poor friend!

The

The people at the inn, at my requeſt, procured me a lodging; and that, agreeable to my wiſhes, at a retired farm-houſe, from whence I wrote to my mother, telling her, that I had accompanied Miſs Lambert on a viſit to a family at W. and that, if ſhe directed her letters to be left at the poſt-office, I ſhould get them ſafe.

I pretended to be very agreeably ſituated; my friend, and the family we were with, extremely obliging, &c.

Oh! my dear, to what mean falſhoods was I obliged to have recourſe!—This is ever the conſequence of ſtraying from the narrow path of duty.——One falſe ſtep is but the beginning of a hundred more.

After three months of dreary ſolitude and continual melancholy, I was at length ſafely delivered of a daughter.——Unfortunate babe!—during the laſt month I ſtaid at my retreat, I did nothing but weep over the ſweet little innocent, whom I was ſo ſoon obliged to commit to the care of ſtrangers.—Oh! what did I not ſuffer!—Let me not dwell on the melancholy ſcene.

I left the dear creature at nurſe with a country woman, of whom I had the moſt unexceptionable character.——I weep ſtill, my Sophy, when I recollect the anguiſh I felt, when, almoſt dying with grief, I preſſed the ſmilling infant to my breaſt, and took a farewel kiſs, recommending her to the protection of Heaven.

I re-

I returned to town.—My mother rejoiced to ſee me;—and, for her ſake, I endeavoured to conceal the ſorrow that preyed upon my ſpirits.

My only conſolation was the few letters I, with dreadful intervals between, received from my huſband. I had from them, however, reaſon to hope, that his affection for me was unalterable.

I found means to inform his father, thinking it might ſoften him in my favour, that I had a daughter, and the method I had taken to conceal the knowledge of it from the world.

He wrote me a very polite letter, commending my prudence, and again made me offers of friendſhip; but that was all.

Soon

Soon after, to my ſurprize, I received a ſecond from him, wherein he told me a very unexpected piece of news,—viz. "that he had been at W. on purpoſe "to ſee my child; and, as the expence "muſt be inconvenient to me, he had "taken all that upon himſelf; kindly "aſſuring me, tho' he could never alter "his reſolution in regard to me, as it "was utterly inconſiſtent with the views "he had for his ſon, yet I might depend "on his being a father to my child."

I melted into tears at this flattering aſſurance. "Oh!" cried I, "why will "he not yield to his generous nature? "ſurely it will at length overcome his "pride, and contribute to the making "me completely happy!"

Ah!

Ah! my dear, much had I to ſuffer ere that wiſhed-for event took place; and ſo long was it delayed, that I was almoſt reduced to deſpair.

Soon after receiving the above-mentioned letter from his Lordſhip, my mother finding it very expenſive living in London, tho' nobody lived with more oeconomy, removed to D.

All places were alike to me—wholly loſt to the world, and inſenſible to its joys.—You, my love, by your generous and ſincere friendſhip, firſt awakened me from the melancholy ſtupidity into which I was plunged, and, in ſome meaſure, revived my reliſh for ſociety.

But

But let me haſten to the concluſion of my hiſtory.——You know all that has happened to me ſince my arrival at D. I have only to add what my dear Somerville's letter informs me—that, on the illneſs of his father, he received orders to return to England——that he found him at the point of death.

At a moment ſo aweful, he ſaw the emptineſs of grandeur, and all the blandiſhments of this tranſitory world, in its true light.

Struck with remorſe at the injuſtice he had done me, he conjured his ſon to make me all the reparation in his power, by publicly acknowledging me as his wife.

He

He ſpoke of me to him in the moſt favourable terms——was pleaſed to commend my prudence and virtue—ſaid, the manner in which I had acted had given the ſtrongeſt proofs of my ſincere regard and affection for Lord Somerville—almoſt with his laſt breath he beſought him to make me a tender and indulgent huſband.

Thus, my dear Sophy, have I given you a faint ſketch of my ſufferings, for which bountiful Heaven is now going ſo amply to reward me.

This morning my delighted mother ſet off for W. to fetch my beloved child.—She would not ſuffer me to accompany her, leſt Lord Somerville ſhould arrive in our abſence.

I am

I am obliged to be as conciſe as poſſible. Had I had more leiſure, how much better could I have worded my little narrative!—But am I not writing to an indulgent friend, who will be partially blind to all its faults?

Come, my love; you know not how much I ſtand in need of your preſence. I have taken a houſe; it is large, commodious, and elegantly furniſhed. Oh! what happineſs do I promiſe myſelf in it, when bleſſed with the company of my Somerville, my child, my mother—and engaging Sophy!

How long we ſhall ſtay here is uncertain—but I will not look forward to diſtant events—the preſent are ſufficiently intereſting!

The

The good folks at D. are now one and all my ladyſhip's moſt obedient humble ſervants.

Adieu! My beſt, my kindeſt compliments to your mama, and my dear Kitty. Her giving you leave to come to me will be eſteemed the higheſt obligation, by her and your affectionate

CAROLINE.

LETTER

LETTER V.

To Mrs. WESTBROOK.

WITH great pleaſure I obey my dear mama's laſt command — but muſt I go even on and forward, with plain ſimple matters of fact? — and will you not allow your girl to trifle and flouriſh a little now and then?—Trifling, you know, is ſo natural to her, that, for the life of her, ſhe cannot help it. — I will endeavour however at leaſt to begin my epiſtle with proper gravity.

I arrived here on Tueſday, about ſix in the evening. — You know I love to ſurpriſe—and, in order to do ſo, left the carriage

carriage at the inn, and walked (it is at no great diſtance) to my beloved's.—A ſingle rap at the door—it opened—"Is your lady at home?"—The fellow eyed me.—I find her porter has been accuſtomed to live in genteel families by his inſolence and want of breeding.

"Is your lady at home?" repeated I, peeviſhly; "the fellow's aſleep!——"Conduct me to her."

He now began to think I muſt be a perſon of ſome conſequence, by the haughty airs I aſſumed.——"I believe, "Madam, my lady is in her dreſſing-"room."

"Which way?" cried I; and up ſtairs without farther ceremony I flew.—Tripping

ping acroſs ſeveral handſome rooms, chance directed me to where ſhe was; for I diſtanced the hobbling fellow by a mile. —— I flung open the door. —— There, reclined on a ſettee, careſſing and playing with her ſweet-ſmiling little girl, I beheld my Caroline; her mother at ſome diſtance at work, benignity and heart-felt ſatisfaction on her countenance.

My lovely friend was dreſſed in black, and looked like an angel. What do they talk of regularity of features and ſuch ſtuff? — Without coming up to the ſet, the formal rules of beauty, which thoſe who have no true feeling for its charms ſo much expatiate on, ſhe has ſomething in her amiable countenance inexpreſſibly charming; — though, ſhe may not at firſt ſtrike one with admira-

tion, yet ſhe is formed to inſpire love, and no one can long continue inſenſible in her company. — Her every look and movement has a peculiar, an irreſiſtible grace. — But where am I wandering?— Digreſſion firſt!

What delightful ſurpriſe and joy brightened on her face at my appearance! She ruſhed into my arms — ſhe could not ſpeak. — I began to condemn my giddy imprudence, when I ſaw her colour change; but tears of pleaſure came ſeaſonably to her relief. — She diſengaged herſelf from my embrace; and, preſſing her child to her breaſt, preſented it to me. I almoſt ſtifled the little puppet with my kiſſes. — We then placed ourſelves on the ſettee, the ſweet cherub on my lap. With what tranſport did ſhe eye us!

For

For ſome time we ſaid little; and what we did ſay the Lord knows; but it was charmingly incoherent.—At laſt, however, we became more intelligible and compoſed. "Come," cried I, "get me "ſome tea; and, in the mean while, I'll "take a flying view of your houſe.—"Very pretty, very elegant! Thoſe crim-"ſon damaſk curtains give an agreeable "fluſh to one's complexion. Let me tell "you, it requires as much taſte to chuſe "one's furniture properly as one's top-"knot.—In this room, for my ſake, who "am determined to make half a thouſand "conqueſts while I ſtay at D——, you "ſhall receive your beaux. I think I "ſhall appear to great advantage pen-"ſively reclined on this couch; my coun-"tenance has naturally a penſive caſt, "you know.—But now let's examine the

"next;" and away I tripped, my delighted ſmiling Caroline following.—"Upon my word, a noble ſuite of "rooms; this India paper and chintz "furniture is extremely elegant. In this "apartment you ſhall entertain your female circle; its decorations are light, "and thoſe pretty nicknacks ſhewy, "but of no intrinſic value, like the "minds and converſation of thoſe gueſts "to whom it is dedicated.—A handſome "ſpacious dining-room this! thoſe pictures are well choſen; fiſh, fowls, and "fruit! they are of themſelves enough "to create an appetite. Here," continued I, "ſhall ſtand the hoſpitable table. "—There ſits your Ladyſhip;—here "your Ladyſhip's Lord and maſter—here "your delighted mother;—and here "your Sophy and her little charge.—

"Remember, my dear, I have taken "upon myſelf the province of her "tutoreſs."

Caroline embraced me—tears of joyful ſenſibility in her eyes——"Oh! my "ſweet, my engaging prattler, go on; "how your livelineſs charms me!"

"'Tis my old way, child; your joy is "of the ſilent kind, mine evaporates at "my lips;—but, though it finds an eaſy "vent, it will not be the leſs laſting.—"I have enough to keep, enough to give, "and even ſome to throw away, as I have "already done in idle chat.—But I have "not done yet—every one has a gift—"mine is that of the tongue—your happineſs has put it in motion—the Lord "knows when it will ſtop."

"Oh!

"Oh! never, never, my dear," ſaid ſhe, "ſhall I be weary of liſtening to "you, my kind and obliging friend. Now "there wants only my Somerville to com-"pleat my unequaled felicity."

"Would to heaven! he were come," cried I; "I am dying with impatience "to ſee him. What kind of a creature "is it?—I like deſcriptive pictures of all "things, becauſe they are generally ſo "very unlike the original. Come, tell "me what ſort of eyes has he? for eyes "at leaſt he certainly has; and it is clear "Cupid had not blinded them when he "made choice of your Ladyſhip.— "There's a well-turned compliment for "you.—But of what kind are thoſe eyes? "—lively, languiſhing, ſoft, tender, "black, blue, gray?"

" Excuſe me, my dear," interrupting me with a ſmile; " I cannot do them " juſtice."

" Oh! to be ſure! well, well, peace " be to him till I ſee him, and judge for " myſelf; whether I ſhall after that ſuf- " him to enjoy much peace, is not ſo " certain: for, if he is not a very, very, " ſtately mortal, I think I ſhall now and " then be tempted to teaze him a little " with my giddy impertinence."

" Oh! my dear Sophy, I am ſure he " will be delighted with you; he has " himſelf a great deal of agreeable vi- " vacity."

" Well, my dear, we ſhall ſee how it " will be. When you find me going too " far (for, Lord help me! I am a ſtrange " half-

" half-witted harumſcarum kind of a good
" ſort of girl)—why then, my dear, you
" muſt give me a hint, a ſide-glance thus—
" a wink — or a tread on my toe — and
" I ſhall ſtand corrected. —— But what
" have we here? a handſome library? I
" hope in heaven it is well ſtored with
" novels and romances. —— Once I had
" reſolved, in ſpite of nature, to make
" myſelf wondrous wiſe — nothing then
" went down but hiſtory, philoſophy,
" and the Lord knows what.—But be-
" hold, after all my pains, I made not
" one whit a better figure than when I firſt
" ſet out in my ſage reſearches—I found
" nobody would be ſo complaiſant as to
" liſten to me; nobody that wiſhed to be
" improved by my wonderful knowledge.
" Every one was ſufficiently wiſe, at leaſt in
" their own conceit. Rouſſeau ſays juſtly,

" *The true art of pleaſing is not ſo much*
" *by diſplaying our own talents, as by giv-*
" *ing others an opportunity of diſplaying*
" *theirs, and by placing our own modeſty*
" *as a foil to their vanity.* — At preſent
" I read merely for amuſement. — Oh!
" here's my good friend Richardſon,
" with Shakeſpeare, Centlivre, and Mrs.
" Lenox. This is as it ſhould be. You
" may expect ſome time hence to ſee a
" little leſs order and regularity amongſt
" thoſe now well-ranged, well-gilt gentry.
" I ſhall throw them all into confuſion,
" for I generally take down half a hun-
" dred books at a time, when I ſet in for
" ſtudy, in a violent hurry — look at
" their titles — read two or three lines in
" the middle of one — at the beginning
" of another — the laſt leaf of a third,
" and ſo on — then leave the library, as

" wiſe

" wiſe as I entered it. 'Tis not long
" ago that I viſited a family in the coun-
" try, where the good man of the houſe,
" judging from the gravity of my diſpo-
" ſition that I muſt no doubt be fond of
" reading, very complaiſantly gave me
" the key of his ſtudy. The firſt day I
" made uſe of it, his lady happened to
" be there at work. I was going very
" compoſedly to take down my uſual
" quantity of books—when up ſhe ſtart-
" ed—" Good heavens! Miſs, what are
" you about!—her face in a glow—Mr.
" Gerard would go wild to ſee you thus
" put every thing in diſorder. Thoſe
" looſe pamphlets are all that either he
" or any one elſe is ſuffered to read; the
" reſt are never touched. Indeed moſt
" of them are wood, and only placed
" there for ornament—and ſurely there

" is reading enough in theſe," pointing to the St. James's Chronicle, half a dozen Magazines, and a collection of Gazettes, " to ſatisfy any reaſonable " perſon. I am confident," continued the good Lady, with a ſelf-ſufficient air of importance, " nobody loves read- " ing better than myſelf——yet I have " not gone through half of them."

My dear Caroline laughed heartily at this little anecdote;—— you, mama, know the parties, and will, I am ſure, follow her example, when you recollect that curious viſit, about which we have ſo often made ourſelves merry.

A ſervant now informed us tea was ready. My friend and I returned arm

in

in arm to her dreſſing-room. Our little Caroline was ſeated on the lap of her delighted grandmother, whoſe age joy ſeems to have renewed——ſhe is abſolutely as chearful and as young as the beſt of us.—What a happy ſociety!—I made tea;—for I muſt be employed, you know, tho' it were but in miſchief.—What a minute packet of trifles!—but I wiſh to make you preſent, as it were, to every thing that paſſed on my firſt arrival;—but, indeed, I need make no apology for my minuteneſs, ſince it was your own command.—I think it is now, however, full time to conclude.——I ſhall only add, that I am inexpreſſibly happy—find myſelf quite at home—and can wiſh for nothing but your company to complete my felicity.——Adieu, my

dear Madam.—Expect in my next a full and particular account of Lord Somerville.—He is hourly expected. Love to Kitty.——Believe me

Yours,

SOPHY WESTBROOK.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

To the ſame.

THE wonderful man is come at laſt. Let me pauſe a while, that I may go on methodically.——My friend, her mother, and I, were, as uſual, ſitting in her dreſſing-room—they at work—my Ladyſhip reading to them——the nurſe amuſing our little Caroline at the window—when, turning to us,—" there is " a carriage at the gate," ſaid ſhe, " and ſeveral ſervants on horſeback."

" Oh! Heaven!" exclaimed my friend, " he is come!"—Her head ſunk on my boſom, as ſhe ſat by me on the ſettee.—

I gave her my ſalts.—" Take courage, " my ſweet Caroline; ſit ſtill a few " moments, and endeavour to compoſe " yourſelf;" for ſhe was hurrying away to meet him—I replaced her.

In a few minutes we heard ſome-body coming acroſs the drawing-room. At this ſhe ſtarted up, and ran eagerly to receive her Lord.——He ruſh'd into her arms——neither of them ſpoke for ſome moments. I took the child, and deſired nurſe to retire.—After repeated embraces, they fondly for a while gazed at each other in ſilence.—At laſt, " my " Caroline!"—" my Somerville!"—in the moſt tender accent, burſt at once from their lips.——He took her hand; and, preſſing it to his heart, led her back to her ſeat.—And here let me ſtop to tell

tell you he is the moſt graceful elegant figure I ever beheld—there is a dignity in his countenance, that commands the utmoſt reſpect——nay, I think it even creates a kind of awe, though he has a moſt gracious inſinuating ſmile, and an addreſs uncommonly eaſy and engaging.

After indulging for a while their mutual raptures, he approached Mrs. Southern.—" Can you forgive me, Ma-" dam," taking her hand, " for the " theft I have committed?—for ſtealing " your charming daughter?——There " is no remedy now, however," added he, ſmiling; " ſhe is irrevocably mine." —He turned to his Caroline, with looks of cordial love.

" Can

" Can I forgive you!" ſaid Mrs. Southern, preſſing his hand to her lips, with an air of grateful pleaſure. " Oh! " Sir, my conſtant prayer to Heaven " ſhall be, that my Caroline may prove " worthy of your generous goodneſs. I " am ſure its bleſſing muſt deſcend on " you for the happineſs you have con- " ferred. You have," added ſhe, ſmiling through her tears, " cauſed the " widow's heart to ſing for joy."

" Worthy Mrs. Southern!" ſaid he, " I find my charming wife, by her de- " ſcription of you, did you no more " than juſtice;—but let not your prayers " be for your daughter only, pray too " that your ſon may ſtudy to deſerve ſo " much ſweetneſs and beauty."

He

He turned to me — " You are very " good, Madam," ſmiling — " but in- " deed you acquit yourſelf ſo gracefully " in the province you have conde- " ſcended to, that you would think the " leſs of the trouble, if you knew how " much it ſhews you to advantage. Let " me now, however, eaſe you of your " pretty burthen.—My little Caroline!" continued he, preſſing the child in his arms, " will you not welcome your fa- " ther?" He kiſſed its cheek, while the ſmiling infant clung round his neck with as much fondneſs as if it had been already ſenſible of natural affection.—— There was ſomething peculiarly graceful in his manner of careſſing it—but, like moſt young fathers, he was ſoon willing to reſign it to a better nurſe. Again kiſſing it, he carried it to his Caroline,

and,

and, putting it into her arms, "Take "your little puppet," ſaid he, ſmiling; "I have acquitted myſelf but auk- "wardly. I may, however, improve "by practice."

She preſſed it to her breaſt with unutterable pleaſure.——He ſtood before her a while, delightedly gazing on the ſweet Madona, for a moſt finiſhed Madona ſhe at that moment appeared.——He placed himſelf by her, and fondly threw his arms round her as ſhe ſat. There never was ſo fine a family picture——I now—I had better have done it ſooner—withdrew, and ſat down to give you theſe particulars.

"I had better have done it ſooner," I ſaid—well had it been for me had I acted

acted with ſo much prudence:——but prudence, I think you once—(was it only once?)—told me is not amongſt the number of my virtues.—Can you gueſs the conſequence of my being witneſs to a ſcene ſo tender?—I am over head and ears in love with matrimony;——and I verily believe, ſo ſurprizing are its effects, that were your favourite Audley now here—ſoft ſoul as he is—I ſhould—Lord! how fortunate is his abſence at this critical juncture!—I ſhould—I ſhould be half-tempted to play the fool and marry.—Yet what ſignifies a huſband like him!—This Somerville is ſuch a man, that I ſhall not for the future have common patience with even the very beſt of my inſignificant pretenders;——but I forget all this while that I am no more a Caroline than they are Somervilles.

villes.——Well then, I think I'll e'en continue ſingle—aye, I believe that will be my wiſeſt courſe; for I do not think —tho' well enough for a toaſt—I am formed for a wife.

Come, now let us have a little more talk of this courtly youth. To be ſerious—Do you know that, greatly as I admire him, I queſtion if he is the kind of man I would chuſe for a huſband;—he would expect ſo many perfections in a wife—would be ſo difficult to pleaſe.—I read his character in his countenance;—there is ſo much good ſenſe—ſo much penetration in his looks—his eyes are ſo piercing, ſo full of fire—that let me die if I was not half-afraid to meet their ſcrutinizing glances.

I ſhall

I ſhall be cautious how I engage with him—in his company, I muſt, I believe, drop all pretenſions to either wit or raillery;——for I am much miſtaken if he would not ſoon convince me how greatly he excels me at thoſe weapons, and ſufficiently mortify my vanity.

Minute as I endeavour to be, I ſay nothing of our occaſional viſitors—they are not worth mentioning—a ſummons to tea.—Adieu for the preſent.—A few lines more, merely for the pleaſure of chatting, tho' I tell you before-hand I have nothing to ſay—that is—to the purpoſe.

On entering the drawing-room, I found Lord Somerville lying on the couch——his Lady ſeated by him, he holding

holding one of her hands.—He began to riſe on my coming in. — " No cere-
" mony, my Lord," cried I; " you
" don't know, perhaps, that I am one
" of your family."

" You do me great honour, Madam;
" I aſſure you I eſteem your company as
" no ſmall addition to my happineſs.—
" I muſt aſpire to the honour of your
" friendſhip; nay, have I not a right
" to it? You are, I find, my Caroline's
" deareſt friend; and I hope neither
" ſhe nor you will diſpute," added he, ſmiling, " that what is her's is mine.—
" But what an indolent fellow muſt you
" think me," continued he, " thus
" lolling at my eaſe!—Remember, how-
" ever, that I travelled poſt; and then,
" by way of apology, you muſt ſup-
" poſe

" poſe me violently fatigued with my " journey."

" We will admit your apology, my " Lord," returned I; " at leaſt for " this day you ſhall be indulged;—but " my friend ſometimes tells me that I " not only am reſtleſs myſelf, but di- " ſturb that of others."

" And I believe," interrupted he, archly, " the accuſation is but too juſt. " thoſe eyes of yours, Madam——"

" Ah! my Lord," cried I, " I find I " ſhall be forced to do what I am not " much accuſtomed to—that is—think " before I ſpeak — your Lordſhip is ſo " quick upon me."

After

After this little lively ſally, we fell into a more general converſation. He gave an entertaining account of his travels, though the firſt mention of them cauſed a momentary ſadneſs in my Caroline—but it ſoon vaniſhed.—Dear creature! how worthy is ſhe of her good fortune!—— May Heaven render it as laſting as it is at preſent perfect!——I doubt not but it will—Lord Somerville is a man of ſenſe—and men of ſenſe ſeldom make bad huſbands.

I proteſt my ſuſpecting Mr. Audley not to have the cleareſt head in the world—nor the beſt furniſhed—is my principal objection. His perſon is well enough—and he appears good-natured—but what lover ever appeared otherwiſe?—He is obſtinate, however, or he

would never ſo long have perſevered in his addreſſes—where, honeſt man! he received ſo very little encouragement.—Now, of all things breathing, an obſtinate fool is the moſt unſufferably tormenting.—You, I know, will tell me, that a too diffident and reſpectful paſſion gives an aukwardneſs to his manner, and prevents his appearing ſo advantageouſly in my company as in that of others.—But would a man of ſenſe ſubmit to the treatment he ſometimes receives from me?——for it muſt be confeſſed I am now and then a little capricious; and perhaps not quite ſo polite as he deſerves;——ah! I much fear thoſe who are ſuch cringing ſlaves will, when converted into lords and maſters, be as inſolent as they were before humble.—Is not that a too common caſe?—my Caroline's

line's acquaintance are a proof.—Thoſe haughty Dames, late ſo overbearing, are now as abjectly fawning.——Indeed pride and meanneſs are inſeparable.—But poor Audley, after all, I believe, is a good kind of man. I find he has made the moſt of my abſence, and gained you entirely over to his ſide. But I fear he will not find himſelf much the better.—Adieu! and good night.

Believe me your

SOPHY.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

To the ſame.

THIS day has been dedicated to impertinence—My friend ſat to ſee company.—Literally to ſee them, I may juſtly ſay—for never was there ſuch a dearth of converſation—and the little that did paſs on the occaſion hardly deſerves the name.——'Tis very hard that people ſhould be obliged to talk, when they have nothing to ſay.—My ſtars! a ſet of females, and nothing to ſay!—Amazing!—but ſo it was!

When we were dreſſed out and ſeated, my Lord came in for a few moments.—"I pity you, Caroline!" ſaid he, taking

her hand; "this is a fooliſh kind of "ceremony!"

"Fooliſh enough, in all conſcience!" cried I.——"I think at leaſt the men "ſhould keep us in countenance;—but "it is plain they do not eſteem matri-"mony ſo joyful an event as to de-"ſerve their congratulations.——'Tis a "little extraordinary, methinks, that "we women ſhould ſo publicly manifeſt "our approbation!—the married ſouls "may indeed countenance each other, "and put the beſt face upon the mat-"ter—but ſurely we ſpinſters——"

"Why, Madam," interrupted he, ſmiling, "the ſpinſters, as you call them, "prove by it that they are ready and "willing in every thing to follow a good "example."

"I un-

"I underſtand your ſly meaning, Sir; "but I rather think they come to give "joy where they juſtly think it is ſo "much wanted. The men, on the con- "trary, as juſtly imagine it needleſs to "add theirs to what muſt already be ſo "complete."

"A very nice diſtinction!" returned he, laughing; "but I at leaſt will al- "low it juſt, ſince my joy can indeed "admit of no addition."

A thundering rap at the door put a ſtop to our converſation. "I have often "been puzzled," reſumed his Lordſhip, "to account for the violent raps a Lady's "ſervant is taught to give at our gate— "while we on the contrary make our "entrance ſo peaceably—but I ſuppoſe "it is to announce the different characters

" of the viſitors—the taciturnity of the
" one—while even at a diſtance begins
" the unmeaning noiſe of the other!"

" I have not time now," cried I; " but
" depend upon it I'll be even with you
" for that pretty compliment."

" Thank heaven!" returned he, laugh-
ing, " I am at leaſt favoured with a truce!
" —I will muſter my forces againſt our
" next meeting. — I ſhall need them all,
" to contend with yours, which are in
" every thing ſo ſuperior."

Gallantly kiſſing his Lady's hand, he gracefully retired—and in fluttered half a hundred well-dreſſed females — Mrs. Derby amongſt the reſt.— Low curtſeys on all ſides—and down, after a proper buſtle, ſat we—fans playing—eyes buſily

employed in examining each other's finery.

At laſt Mrs. Derby, in a fawning accent, broke ſilence—addreſſing herſelf to Lady Somerville—"You cannot think "how I have longed to ſee your La'ſhip "—I have thought of you continually— "I would have paid a viſit without cere- "mony long ago—but a dear friend of "mine met with a dreadful accident.— "She was overturned in her coach—I "really thought I ſhould have died "when I heard of it—for I believe no- "body feels more for their friends.—I "ſet off for her houſe immediately— "through moſt ſhocking roads—at the "peril of my life."

"And how is ſhe?" cried another Lady; "I heard ſhe had broke her arm."

"You heard ſhe had broke her arm! "and pray, Ma'am, who told you ſo?"

The other ſeemed a little diſconcerted —for I found ſhe was amongſt the moſt humble of our viſitors—and conſequently had no right to put in her word.—"It "was ſo reported, Madam."

Madam made no anſwer—but turning to an old dowager who ſat next her—"I "hope your La'ſhip's cough is better."

Without waiting her reply—"Pray, "have you heard from poor Mrs. Murry "ſince ſhe went to Bath?—I fear ſhe "will never return. You cannot think "how I was ſhocked when ſhe came to "take

" take leave. She was ſo altered — ſo " emaciated — my heart bled for her. — " I have too much ſenſibility for my " peace."

" I hear ſhe is better," returned the other. — Mrs. Derby ſagaciouſly ſhook her head — " May be ſo!"

A ſhort ſilence enſued — broke at laſt by a third Lady's aſking " if it was true " that Miſs Sharpe was gone to Briſtol?" adding, " they tell me ſhe is in a deep " conſumption."

Mrs. Derby — " I never heard a ſyl- " lable of it; but indeed I ſhould not " wonder, conſidering the racketing " life ſhe led. What elſe could ſhe ex- " pect? —— They ſay too poor Lady " Bunckle is in a dangerous way, and

" not likely to recover after her lying-
" in;——and as for Miſs Arnold, the
" phyſicians have actually given her
" over. I paid a viſit to her mother
" laſt week;—for—poor thing!—I love
" to be civil to every body—I thought
" it charity, though I have a thouſand
" others on my hand;—but my friend's
" illneſs——really I have hardly a mo-
" ment to myſelf—never was poor crea-
" ture ſo altered——ſhe is abſolutely a
" fright."

" Aye, that I always thought," cried a young Lady, who had not yet ſpoke;—but who, you will own, ſpoke to the purpoſe when ſhe did.—" There is an
" end of her marriage, that they made
" ſuch a rout about. Lord! I was ſick
" of the nauſeous ſubject;——but laſt
" night, at Mrs Bennet's rout, they

" put

" put me out of all patience. They
" will have it that Butler is almoſt
" diſtracted.—Ridiculous!—an inſignifi-
" cant creature like her, without fortune!
" The man muſt be mad! I ſaw no-
" thing to hinder his having her long
" ago, if he had been ſo violently in
" love as ſome people pretend. I am
" ſure ſhe was willing enough, poor
" thing! but I am really ſorry for her
" illneſs—nobody has a more compaſ-
" ſionate heart. I wiſh it were leſs ſo.
" I feel too much for others."

" You mentioned Mrs. Bennet juſt
" now," cried another old Lady——
" pray how is her cold? She cough'd
" moſt prodigiouſly laſt time ſhe was at
" my houſe.—She almoſt deafened me.
" I wonder people cannot keep it under

" a little, or elſe ſtay at home. She " abſolutely ſtuns one."

" Every body has colds, I think," ſays Mrs Derby. — " I myſelf am far " from being well——a violent pain in " my ſide—and every now and then the " oddeſt ſwimming in my head — then I " hardly ſleep a ſingle hour in the night, " I have ſuch a tremor on my nerves— " ſuch fluſhings—ſuch ſhiverings—ſuch " lowneſs of ſpirits—ſuch a faintneſs, " with a conſtant drowſineſs, and moſt " dreadful head-ach—no appetite in the " world—yet a continual drought."

Every one ſagely pronounced it a complication of diſtempers —— a complication with a witneſs! —— Amazingly entertaining all this! — but you are to remember they came to give joy —

joy—and you muſt allow they to a miracle adapted their diſcourſe to the occaſion.

In about half an hour the ſubject of ſickneſs was exhauſted—now came dreſs. Mrs. Derby, fawningly addreſſing herſelf to my friend, admired every part of hers —— nobody put on their cloaths ſo elegantly—— ſhe always thought ſo, &c. &c.

To ſpare your patience, I'll abridge this ſubject——but I muſt endeavour to make you ſmile at Mrs. Derby's behaviour to me.——For the firſt half hour, nothing could be more ſupercilioufly haughty; ſuppoſing, no doubt, that Lady Somerville had now, in her turn, got a humble companion—and as ſuch ſhe thought it incumbent on her to treat

me.—She had from the firſt honoured me with many ſcrutinizing glances, and with her eyes meaſured me from head to foot. I found an opportunity to hint this to my Caroline—ſhe coloured with reſentment; and her behaviour, always tender and affectionate, was inſtantly changed to the moſt profound reſpect. —From that moment I became the principal object of her attention. How Mrs. Derby ſtared!—What could I be?—— Some diſguiſed Princeſs at leaſt!—That ſhe might not, as in the caſe of my friend, be again put to the bluſh when ſhe diſcovered my quality, from that inſtant I became a perſon of infinite conſequence. Every thing was addreſſed to Miſs Weſtbrook—her opinion ſubmitted to mine.——In ſhort, I became all in all with the good Lady.

At length—their common-place-matter-of-fact-converſation being exhauſted, our impertinents took leave, after a thouſand ſervile compliments to her Ladyſhip, and as many to me, whom they flattered themſelves they ſhould have the honour of ſeeing at their houſes.——But our parade was not yet over.—Ere they were well out, as many more ruſh'd in——and the ſame inſipid farce was acted over again.—One would have thought that a general mortality prevailed—we heard of nothing but the dead and dying—by their account there is ſcarce a ſingle perſon in town perfectly in health.

At length, thank Heaven! the viſiting hour was over—and we ſat down peaceably to our coffee.——His Lordſhip favoured us with his company.—His lively conver-

converſation ſoon raiſed my ſpirits, which the humdrums had compoſed to a ſort of ſtupid ſlumber.—They were not ſuffered long to doze after his entrance. I gave, at his requeſt, a ludicrous deſcription of our gueſts. —— He enjoyed it exceſſively —— but my gentle Caroline, though ſhe could not refrain from laughing, chid me for being ſo ſatirical. —— "I muſt not," ſhe ſaid, "encourage a talent ſo dangerous and "unamiable."

"It is only unamiable," returned my Lord, "when miſapplied; —— it is "both agreeable and uſeful, when di- "rected by judgement and good-nature. "—They are not in the leaſt incompa- "tible. — Miſs Weſtbrook's judgement "points out to her, people's follies and "ridiculous foibles; — and ſhe applies "her

" her wit to the good-natured purpoſe
" of laughing them out of counte-
" nance."

" I am much obliged to your Lord-
" ſhip," ſaid I, ſmiling — " you have
" made an excellent apology, and
" brought me off with flying colours."
— " 'Tis impoſſible," ſaid my friend,
" my Lord ſhould think more favour-
" ably than I do of the goodneſs of my
" Sophy's heart. I know nobody more
" generouſly indulgent to the foibles
" and imperfection of her friends. But
" are you not, my dear," kindly preſ-
ſing my hand, — " rather too ſevere on
" thoſe who you think, and we will al-
" low, are unworthy to be ranked in
" that number? — I ſhould indeed wiſh
" to limit the circle of my acquaintance
" to thoſe only whom I could regard in

" that

" that light; — but one muſt comply
" with the eſtabliſhed cuſtoms of the
" world.—I have myſelf, in leſs happy
" days, been but too apt to fret and
" complain, becauſe my acquaintance
" were not, in their tempers and beha-
" viour, what I could have wiſhed and
" thought they ought to be. —— But
" now,"—looking with tender gratitude on Lord Somerville,—" when my feli-
" city is ſo perfect, I can make allow-
" ance for others that are leſs ſo, and
" no longer find an inclination to cen-
" ſure their little foibles. I ſtill ſee
" them;—but, as it ſhall be my whole
" ſtudy, if poſſible, to merit my good
" fortune, I ſhall only endeavour to
" profit by them—and, inſtead of find-
" ing fault with others, take care that
" my own conduct and behaviour is ir-
" reproachable."

My

My Lord preſſed her hand to his lips,
" —You ſay juſtly, my dear, that cu-
" ſtom muſt be complied with—I ſhould
" be ſorry to ſee you too much indulge
" your naturally retired turn; —how-
" ever inſipid our viſitors may be, it
" will at leaſt vary the ſcene;—there
" might be ſome danger, if I found not
" amuſement at home, that I might be
" tempted to ſeek it elſewhere. — My
" gentle Caroline need not be informed
" that it requires a good deal of pains
" to give any kind of novelty to our do-
" meſtic pleaſures—and that two per-
" ſons who are united for life, with
" whatever violence of paſſion they may
" ſet out, will find ſome difficulty to
" prevent that paſſion from languiſhing.
" ——It cannot be ſuppoſed that they,
" who daily ſee each other, ſhould al-
" ways be able to ſupport a converſa-
" tion

" tion with any degree of ſpirit.—They
" muſt therefore, of neceſſity, have re-
" courſe to foreign helps, to give it any
" ſhare of novelty.—And ſuch is the na-
" ture of man," continued he, ſmiling,
" ſo fond are we of variety, that good-
" neſs itſelf, if too uniform, would be
" apt to pall and loſe its reliſh. —— I
" have often wondered at the prepoſte-
" rous behaviour of ſome ladies," con-
tinued he, " who, after marriage, make
" no farther uſe of thoſe engaging ac-
" compliſhments, tho' acquired with ſo
" much expence and pains, as if their
" aſſiſting them to gain a huſband was
" all they were intended for; —— but,
" when once gained, no matter how
" ſhort a while they enjoy his affections,
" —or perhaps not reflecting that, as
" ſomebody ſays, — *It is eaſier to catch*
" *birds than make cages.*"

Ah!

Ah! did I not ſay it would be no eaſy matter to pleaſe this man?—He is a critical obſerver,—has all our foibles and imperfections at his fingers end,—and, though immenſely well bred, yet I have often obſerved him in company couch under the appearance of a compliment the moſt ſevere raillery.—It is not, indeed, every capacity that can find him out, he is ſuch a ſly wretch.—Under all his lively gaiety, nothing eſcapes him—he has a thorough knowledge of our ſex.—Ah! of what dangerous talents is he poſſeſſed!—but I hope the lovely and amiable charms of my Caroline will long, long prevent their exertion.——She, if any mortal woman can, muſt preſerve his conſtancy;——but I heartily thank Heaven he is no huſband of mine, or the Lord knows what would be the conſequence.—I can ſee, the honeſt man has

a will

a will of his own—and ſo, if I may credit my dear (ſometimes lecturing) mama, has ſomebody elſe;—but our gentle Caroline is all tender compliance and ſweet ſubmiſſion.

I, you know, have a woeful ſhort memory, and a peculiar knack of forgetting what I don't wiſh to remember. Perhaps that bugbear of a word—"Obey"—might chance to be of the number.—But Caroline, good ſoul! takes effectual pains it never ſhall eſcape hers;——for what think you ſhe does, but every morning, on her knees, read over the matrimonial ſervice, putting up fervent petitions that ſhe may worthily fulfil her lawful engagements?——Dear creature! how ſweetly exemplary is her whole conduct!——Truſt me, mama, you never did a wiſer thing in your life than in letting

me

me come here. Goodneſs in her appears ſo amiable, that one cannot help being in love with one's duty;—but, though arrived at this amazing pitch of perfection, I fear I ſhall never be in love with the honeſt ſoul that duty would recommend to my choice!—So don't raiſe your expectation too high;—for my reformation is not yet ſo confirmed, but that I have reaſon to dread a relapſe.

Oh! do you know Mrs. Southern has taken your province upon her? She has ſome knowledge of your Audley—has heard a wonderful character of him, for virtue, ſobriety, ſtupidity—ah! cry him mercy—I believe ſhe did not enumerate this laſt perfection!—but, in ſhort, ſhe has heard he is a mighty harmleſs good kind of man—and for that reaſon is become

come his moſt ſtrenuous advocate.—— Worthy woman!—pity it is

" Who ſpeaks ſo well, ſhould ever ſpeak
" in vain."

Adieu, my dear Madam; I wonder you have patience with the unconſcionable length of my letters;—but you are accuſtomed to your prating girl.—Alas! what remedy for a natural imperfection? Ah! I muſt not forget Kitty;—but I'll tell her more of my mind in a moment, as I am juſt going to write to her.

Ever yours,

SOPHY.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

To the ſame.

THEY are actually going—Oh! how ſhall I part with my ſweet friend?—his Lordſhip is already heartily ſick of D—; a genteel houſe is taken for Mrs. Southern—who propoſes, as ſoon as ſhe can meet with a place to her liking, to retire into the country, as moſt agreeable to her taſte.—My Lord has ſettled on her a genteel annuity—I believe my Caroline would have been glad had ſhe continued to live with them—but her Lord would not, I am ſure, however highly he eſteems the good Lady, have agreed to it, had ſhe even ventured to make the propoſal,

propoſal, which ſhe very prudently did not.——

My gentle friend would not, if left to her choice, chuſe London for the place of her reſidence—ſhe has no taſte for its empty amuſements—and dreads the thoughts of the hurry and buſtle of the Beau Monde—minds of nice ſenſibility are not fond of public pleaſures—the vain and fruitleſs felicity of thoſe who have no delicate ſenſations, and who think they enjoy life while they diſſipate it. Lord Somerville is of a different opinion—and tho' he thinks—and in moſt things really has great delicacy—yet he is ſo far from deſpiſing thoſe pleaſures, that I am convinced he will enter into them——perhaps with too much ſpirit!—

I have

I have received preſſing invitations from both to accompany them—but I can neither expect nor deſire your conſent; tenderly as I love my friend, yet my dear mama may juſtly claim the preference—and if I muſt part with one, you ſhall not—muſt not—be the perſon.——I ſhall hear from my Caroline. She has promiſed to renew our correſpondence—to be as punctual as ever—for tho' ſhe will now have leſs time at her own diſpoſal then formerly, yet every leiſure hour, ſhe ſays, ſhall be dedicated to me—this vile journey has ſtrangely unhinged us—Oh! this Lord and Maſter of hers!——Elegant, tender, handſome as he is——commend me to dear Liberty!———

No ſooner did the whim ſeize him of going to London, than inſtantly every thing is put in motion for their departure.——I can ſee he has been accuſtomed to have his own will—and woe be to that daring mortal who ſhould at-

tempt to controul him!—that will never, I dare anſwer for it, be my gentle Caroline.——The man is haſty and paſſionate, not to her indeed—for is it poſſible ſhe ſhould ever give him cauſe?—but to his domeſtics—yet there is ſomething graceful even in his anger.——This morning he broke into ſeveral little ſallies of petulance becauſe his ſervants had miſtaken ſome of his orders—orders that were given with ſo much hurry and impetuoſity that heads clearer then theirs might have miſunderſtood them.

My poor Caroline turned pale, and ventured not to open her lips. Mine, however, you know, are not ſo eaſily cloſed. —With an air half ſerious, I very freely rallied him on his petulance. I could ſee my friend was under ſome apprehenſions that I ſhould rather augment then diminiſh his reſentment by that liberty;—but ſhe was miſtaken; and I really think laughing at theſe flouriſhing airs, and ſhewing them we are not

to

to be discomposed by their unreasonable caprice, is much a more likely way to cure people of them than a silent diffidence and fear.—The first must convince we are not to be intimidated with their blustering airs, when we have done nothing for which we have reason to reproach ourselves—and the last would give them but a too high idea of their importance.——As there would be no managing some creatures if they knew their own strength, so would it be with that more ungovernable creature man: —This however is not a doctrine I would venture to inculcate to my friend—'tis a tender point—and I shall ever be cautious how I give my advice in a case so delicate.—But my raillery to her Lord proved that it is not always unseasonable on those occasions.——

He took my hand—"Spare me," cry'd he, smiling; "you have really set my "conduct in a very ridiculous light.— "But was I so very much in fault?

" Thoſe fellows would provoke the
" patience of a Job!—Stupid blunder-
" ing wretches!"

" Be thankful, my Lord, you have a
" clearer head; you would be very ſorry
" ſhould any of theſe wretches, as you
" call them, pretend to vie with you in
" underſtanding: Why then do you not
" give proofs of your ſuperiority by bear-
" ing with a ſtupidity, which, I dare
" ſay, you think natural enough in peo-
" ple of their rank?——Tho' it is not
" always," added I archly, " ſuperior
" talents that diſtinguiſh the Patrician
" from the Plebeian——but in you we
" will be complaiſant enough to allow
" that to be the caſe. I ſhould have
" more pride, were I your Lordſhip,
" than, by yielding to the tranſports of
" paſſion, which is never under the in-
" fluence of reaſon, thus to put myſelf
" on a level with thoſe who have ſo
" little pretenſions to that nobleſt gift
" of Heaven."——

" Sweet preacher!" cry'd he, " what " a pompous lecture have you read me! " the great Sheridan himſelf could not " have acquitted himſelf with more elo- " quence! It has produced all the effect " you could wiſh.—See, I am aiming at " a bluſh; and, penitent like, I ſincerely " ask your pardon for having ſo far for- " got myſelf in your preſence—and in " yours, my gentle Caroline" —taking her hand.—" But why this tremor? " I am a ſtrange racketing fellow. But " you will ſoon be accuſtomed to my " ways. I am not naturally either " moroſe or ill-natured. You muſt not " then appear ſo much diſcompoſed at " my little tranſient fallies of impatience. " I admire meekneſs. But I would not " have it degenerate into a tame, a mean " ſervility; tell me freely, with engage- " ing frankneſs, when you think me " wrong.——Your good ſenſe will in- " ſtruct you when you may moſt ſeaſon- " ably give me a gentle reproof, Perhaps " that may not be during the firſt tranſ-

" ports of my paſſion. — But, as I
" think you, my love, at leaſt, will
" never be the object of thoſe tranſports,
" ſo, by your ſoothing blandiſhments
" and delicate tenderneſs, you can never
" fail to aſſuage it. Look upon me as
" your friend, your lover, as well as
" husband. —— But, tho' it may ſome-
" times be graceful and becoming in you
" to yield your will to mine — perhaps
" even when yours appears to you the
" moſt reaſonable — yet think not I ex-
" pect a ſlaviſh compliance. —— Let me
" never ſee you under any uneaſy re-
" ſtraint — or from that moment our
" happineſs is at an end. Perfect love
" caſteth out fear — 'tis a mean an igno-
" ble paſſion. — I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf
" for exciting it, and you too perhaps
" for indulging it. — I ſhould no longer
" have any confidence in you. — You
" would reſtrain the open and endear-
" ing effuſions of your heart — you
" would be in a continual dread of of-
" fending — in ſhort, we ſhould labour
" under

" under a mutual reſtraint.—Never, for " a moment, then, let ſuch a name enter " your head as that of Lord and Maſter. " —But eſteem me, as I really am, your " fond open-hearted, and affectionate " friend.—There," added he, " ſmil- " ing, and again taking my hand, what " ſay you to my Lecture? Do you know " my motive for giving you this ſpecimen " of my Elocution?—You are greatly in- " debted to me—ſince it was merely to " ſhew how much in eloquence you excel " me—'twas only intended as a foil to " yours."——

He continued chatting with great vivacity—but I was not very attentive.—I could ſee my friend was diſturb'd at what he had been ſaying to her. She ſeemed loſt in thought—and now, as breakfaſt was finiſh'd, ſhe withdrew.—My Lord followed her with his eyes.—" Good heavens! my dear Miſs Weſt- " brook," cry'd he, " have I ſaid any " thing harſh? My Caroline appears un-

" eaſy.—I ſhall never forgive myſelf if I
" am the cauſe! There never was ſuch a
" thoughtleſs fellow! I am always get-
" ting into ſome ſcrape or other—but I
" will follow my gentle love, and, by
" my fond, my tender careſſes, ſoothe
" her again to peace"

I ſtopped him—for I fear'd he might find her in tears—and tho' I am well convinced they would be tears of gentle ſorrow, yet men are not capable of diſtinguiſhing thoſe delicate ſenſations, and might have been apt to attribute them to a wrong cauſe.—" Stay, my Lord," ſaid I, " I will go in ſearch of my friend
" —well am I aſſured your fears are
" groundleſs.—She has too much good
" ſenſe to miſtake your meaning."——

Away I went.——On entering her apartment, I found her, as I expected, weeping—her child in her arms—gazing on it, and preſſing it to her breaſt

by

by turns.—" Oh Sophy," ſaid ſhe, " my Lord thinks meanly of me."——

" Ridiculous!" cry'd I, " how can you " entertain ſo injurious a ſuſpicion?"

" Ah! my dear, would I had a little " of your charming ſpirits! He would " like me better,—He thinks me a tame " inſipid——"

" Huſh! huſh! child!—child, I ſay, " for indeed that was a childiſh ſpeech! " —take my word for it, men of wit like " him are not ſo very fond of your ſpi- " rited wives—they love not to be foil'd " at their own weapons."——

" Oh! my dear, my only ambition is, to " be what is moſt agreeable to his taſte."

" And has he not proved that you are " ſo? Did he not chuſe you in preference " to all others? Young as he was, many " women and fine ones too muſt he have " ſeen, ere he became acquainted with

" you ; and does he not return to you
" tender and conſtant, after a tedious
" abſence ? Did he not preſerve his
" heart for you, in ſpite of obſtacles that
" would have dampt the paſſion of al-
" moſt any man but himſelf? "——

" Ah! my friend, perhaps thoſe very
" obſtacles, to a man of his enterprizing
" genius, would rather augment than
" damp his ardour — but now they are
" removed——"

" Well, now they are removed,"—
interrupted I, " what is the conſequence?
" He flies to you with a lover's eagerneſs,
" and gives you hourly proofs that the
" fire the little God had kindled by your
" bright eyes flames as bright as ever.—
" I have only one piece of advice to give
" you: — Beware of entertaining too
" much diffidence of yourſelf. —— Aſ-
" ſume that dignity, which is the reſult
" of conſcious worth. —— Think but as
" well of yourſelf as you juſtly merit—
" and others will do the ſame."——

" Ah!

" Ah! my dear, but I am depreſſed
" with a ſenſe of obligations, which I can
" neither deſerve nor repay." ——

" Do you then, cry'd I, ſet ſo very high
" a value on riches and grandeur? You
" are not perhaps aware that there is even
" ſome degree of meanneſs in this kind
" of gratitude. One would be tempted to
" think — but that I ſo perfectly know
" your heart — that you would not, if in
" Lord Somerville's place, have been ca-
" pable of his generoſity, ſince you ap-
" pear to eſteem it ſo extraordinary. —
" But what, after all, has he done? —
" Married, without a fortune, a woman
" the virtues of whoſe mind and the
" charms of whoſe perſon are above all
" price! — Don't think I flatter — for,
" inferior as I eſteem myſelf to you, I
" ſhould think the man on whom I be-
" ſtow myſelf under at leaſt an equal
" obligation to that which he confers, let
" his rank and fortune be what it would,
" — I give him my all —— He does no

" more — nor would he have chosen me
" had he not thought me necessary to
" his happiness. Nay, if I confer hap-
" piness, he is even my debtor, since
" his riches and title cannot insure mine.
" Treat those empty baubles then as they
" deserve (I know you despise them),
" and regard things in a just an impartial
" light. — Lord Somerville married you,
" because your charms captivated his
" heart. You married him from the
" same motive. He is an agreeable
" man — you an amiable woman. — Your
" merits are nearly equal, tho' I think,
" in some respects, you have the advan-
" tage. Let those advantages then be
" placed in the balance with his
" wealth — and, I'll answer for it, they
" will infinitely outweigh it; conse-
" quently the obligation is rather on
" his side. — Now never more, after all
" these my sage arguments, let me hear
" you so much as hint at an oppressive
" sense of the favours he has conferr'd.

" By

" By indulging that ridiculous humility,
" you will deſtroy both his happineſs and
" your own.—Regard him as your friend
" —as your equal.—I pray Heaven he
" may prove himſelf equal to you in merit
" and virtues. Come," continued I, em-
bracing her, " dry thoſe dove-like
" eyes—aſſume a chearful look—reſume
" your gentle captivating ſmiles—and
" let us go down to the gay wretch—
" gay with health, youth, and af-
" fluence."——

She preſs'd me in her arms. "My ſweet
" lecturer, my ſenſible, my unparalleled
" friend! what will become of me when
" deprived of your dear ſoothing conſola-
" tion and advice? Ah! when ſeparated
" from you, I am but half myſelf. O!
" Sophy, how much ſhall I miſs you!
"—Would to heaven your worthy mama
" —but it would be cruelty to deprive
" her of you—I cannot, ought not
" to deſire it—yet alas, my friend,
" I am fill'd with uneaſy apprehenſions
" on

" on account of this dreaded journey.
" How will my faint graces be eclips'd!"

" This vile diffidence!" interrupted L. " Have you ſo ſoon forgot my coun-
" ſel? I defy all the affected airs and
" graces of the town-bred belles, with
" all their native and borrowed charms
" combined, to rival the genuine capti-
" vating beauties of my Caroline. Only,
" as I told you before, ſet a proper va-
" lue on yourſelf. — More conſcious of
" your worth, they'll never love you
" leſs, ſays the poet —but a great deal
" more, ſays your Sophy. —— *Allons*
" *donc!*" She ſmiled, and down ſtairs we tript, arm in arm.

Entering the parlour, my Lord advanced to meet us——with his uſual grace; —he held a book in his hand. —
" What! have you been ſtudying?" cried I, gaily, " to govern your paſ-
" ſions, I hope!"—" Why," returned he,

he, in the ſame tone, "does my Caroline "think I want a leſſon of that nature? "I appeal to her.—You, I know, are "always hard upon me. What ſays "my love?" looking at her with eyes of tenderneſs, yet with a kind of ſcrutiny, as if he wanted to trace in her artleſs countenance the impreſſion his late behaviour had made on her.

"I ſay," returned ſhe, preſſing his hand to her lips, "that, were I aſſured "my utmoſt wiſh would be gratified, "that wiſh would be, that my Somer-"ville might ever continue juſt what he "is; for, believe me, I do not think it "poſſible he ſhould be more amiable "or engaging."

"What return," cried he, "ſhall I "make for this ſweet obliging compli-"ment? Words are too faint. In this "way only," fondly preſſing her to his heart, "can I expreſs my gratitude!"

And

And thus the cloud blew over, and ſunſhine took place. —— May Heaven continue to beſtow on this charming pair a happineſs, at preſent, almoſt unequaled. ——Adieu! my dear mama; I ſhall very ſoon have the pleaſure of embracing you. That pleaſure will make me ſome amends for the pain of parting from my friend.

SOPHY.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

To the ſame.

YOU may expect me by to-morrow evening, accompanied by our worthy Mrs Southern, who was charmed with your friendly, and at this time ſo ſeaſonable, invitation. Caroline too is delighted—and, indeed, my dear mama, you have highly obliged me.——They ſend you a thouſand thanks——I join mine.—Ah! to-morrow—I cannot write, I can do nothing —— this vile parting—I am quite ſtupified—there is no bearing it.—Oh! my ſweet gentle Caroline—yet mine will be the loſs.—She is going with a huſband whom ſhe perfectly adores.—Every place where he is muſt be agreeable. Her only fear is leſt diſſipation and amuſement ſhould inſenſibly diminiſh

diminiſh his paſſion. " Yet," ſaid ſhe this morning, when we were alone together, " I am far from wiſhing wholly " to engroſs his company, dear as it is " to me.—Short abſences are both ne- " ceſſary and agreeable. They give on " our meeting a double reliſh to each " other's ſociety. It ſhall be my ſtudy " (indeed it will require none) ever to " meet him with good humour, ſmiles, " and tender complacency—nor ſhall I " omit any endeavours, either by com- " pany or the exertion of all the little " accompliſhments I am miſtreſs of, to " render his home chearful and agree- " able."—May Heaven proſper her endeavours, and crown them with ſucceſs! Adieu, mama. Excuſe the ſhortneſs of this—it was only to inform you when you might expect my return—I have now but little leiſure for writing.

Believe me ever yours,

SOPHY.

Two

Two Letters here are omitted.

LETTER X.

To SOPHY.

London.

I Hope my beloved Sophy received my laſt, and will not again chide me for my conciſeneſs. — I now ſit down to inform her that I am as happy as ſhe could wiſh—much pleaſed with my houſe, and its ſituation —— it is indeed ſpacious and noble.—Will you give me leave to talk of family affairs? They at preſent engroſs moſt of my attention.——When I am more perfectly ſettled, I will entertain you with ſubjects more ſuited to your taſte.

On my arrival here, I found only a houſekeeper; —— but I have already hired a proper number of female ſervants

vants—with the men I have no concern—honeſt nurſe, and the faithful ingenious girl your mama was ſo obliging as to recommend to me, I retain.—Sally is, you know, very handy.—I like her better every day—though, even from the firſt, her countenance prepoſſeſſed me in her favour. I have one rule with my ſervants.—It is this:—When I intend to engage them, I diſtinctly point out to them their different employments.—"You are not," ſay I, "to interfere with each other's "buſineſs, but carefully to mind your "own. The firſt fault you commit will "be attributed to thoughtleſſneſs or in-"advertency;—for the next, you will "be mildly reproved;—but, if you re-"peat it a third time, you are inſtantly "diſmiſſed. I will hear no excuſe, nor "admit of any—take care, therefore—I "have told you what you are to ex-"pect."—And believe me, Sophy, I ſhall punctually keep my word; for I will never condeſcend to the meanneſs of

of chiding my ſervants. You will perhaps ſay, that in my ſtation I ſhall have little to do with thoſe affairs. But you are miſtaken; I ſhall certainly never be ſo very fine a Lady as to neglect thoſe domeſtic duties—one may be properly mindful of them, without in the leaſt deſcending from one's rank.—But I ſhall avoid that buſtle, that ridiculous parade of notability, which ſome good Ladies think ſo becoming to aſſume.—As I riſe early, all my family affairs may eaſily be ſettled before my Lord joins me at breakfaſt. My houſekeeper may perhaps be a very good ſort of woman—indeed ſhe appears to be ſo—but I ſhall, without laying aſide a proper ſhare of dignity, give my own orders, and likewiſe ſee that they are properly executed. This will oblige me frequently to ſpeak to the ſervants myſelf—but I ſhall give my inſtructions in few words—not indeed with haughtineſs, but in a manner which will remind them of their diſtance, and

inſure a proper reſpect.—I cannot perſuade myſelf, my dear Sophy, that any rank, however high, ought to exempt a woman from thoſe duties ſo peculiarly her province. The governing with mildneſs, and regulating her domeſtic concerns, is ſurely both a uſeful and agreeable employment.—This, and the education of my little cherub, ſhall be the important affair, the moſt diligent concerns of my life—the reſt I give to the ſtudy of pleaſing my huſband, and endeavouring to inſure the continuance of his affections to company and innocent amuſements.—I think, if I carefully purſue this plan, there will be little time left for inactive idleneſs.—Oh! my ſweet young tutoreſs, why did you ſo ſoon give up your charge? It is with diffidence I am going to ſupply your place. I will endeavour to profit by the few hints you favoured me with——and I think there will be no great difficulty in putting them in practice.—Nurſe is a woman of

plain

plain ſenſe, and very readily imbibed my inſtructions, which, I dare ſay, ſhe punctually follows. Sally has a more lively apprehenſion, more judgement, and has had the advantage of a good education; ſhe is indeed a ſenſible ingenious girl, and eaſily comprehended my plan, a ſketch of which I have given her in writing. Theſe two are the only ſervants who are on any occaſion permitted to enter the nurſery—I myſelf ſhall ſpend every hour there, which my Lord or company can diſpenſe with.

Now, my dear, the faults and foibles to which a female is moſt ſubject, are, I think, pride, vanity, a paſſion for dreſs, and a deſire of admiration.—To prevent the firſt, my Caroline ſhall, as long as I poſſibly can conceal it, be kept ignorant of her birth.—For the ſecond, the terms beauty and deformity ſhall never once be named in her preſence. She ſhall never, as long as I can prevent it,

it, know that the former is preferred to the latter.—Not one encomium on her perſon ſhall ſhe ever hear. She ſhall not, even while under my tuition, that is to ſay, till ſhe is of an age to appear in company, know that there is ſuch an invention to feed one's vanity as a looking-glaſs. She has indeed already ſeen them; but that, at her tender age, will ſoon be forgot; and, except in the dreſſing-rooms, there is not now ſuch a piece of furniture in the houſe. I have removed thoſe that I juſtly thought unneceſſary, and placed in their ſtead much more valuable ornaments—pictures by the beſt hands.——My dear Somerville has an elegant taſte, and no leſs judgement, in the polite arts. He ſmiles at my precautions, but does not diſapprove them.—Then for dreſs—her's ſhall have nothing but neatneſs to recommend it. She ſhall never be told that cloaths were intended for any other uſe than that for which in reality they were originally deſigned—

ſigned—never ſuppoſe they were meant for ornaments——nor indeed ſhall her's have to boaſt of.—How prepoſterous is the conduct of ſome parents, as if they feared their children would not early enough learn to be vain, without their aſſiſtance! They are taught from their very infancy, to endeavour to outſhine other children in finery — to entertain a high opinion of their beauty —— and to ſet a high value on riches;—to pleaſe their weak mothers, every one who ſees them commends them to their face. — "Oh! ſhe's a ſweet child!—what charming eyes! — what features will thoſe "be, when they come to be formed! "——Many a heart will ſhe ere long "ſubdue." —The girl liſtens—for girls are quick of apprehenſion;—and their minds thus early vitiated with pride and vanity, what wonder that the generality of women are ſo unamiable?—Oh! with what care ſhall I watch over my Caroline—and, if poſſible, guard her from

thoſe vices!—Every leſſon ſhe receives ſhall be given in ſuch a manner, that it ſhall appear an amuſement.—Particularly ſtudious ſhall I be not to ſour her temper by harſhneſs, at the ſame time that ſhe ſhall never be humoured in any unreaſonable indulgence.—If ſhe aſks for any thing that is fit for her to have, it will be given at the firſt word.—If, on the contrary, improper, "It is not for you, "—you muſt not have it,"——ſhall be the anſwer,—and no other will ſhe have, though ſhe intreat for it ever ſo long. Nobody will take any farther notice of her; but leave her to amuſe herſelf with crying as long as ſhe thinks proper. She will ſoon find it is in vain, and that it anſwers no manner of purpoſe; that we are not in the leaſt diſcompoſed with her perverſeneſs, which hurts nobody but herſelf.—I'll anſwer for it, this method will ſoon cure her of it.—I ſhall in a great many things follow the inſtructions of your favourite Rouſſeau. They

are admirable in ſome inſtances. — She will, when taught muſic and dancing, be likewiſe taught to believe that they are neceſſary things, which every body learns.——She will not be told, when learning the latter, that it is to give her a graceful movement and genteel carriage——but that it is the cuſtom, and what every body does as well as herſelf. —This will prevent her ſetting any value on thoſe accompliſhments, or ſuppoſing that ſhe excels others. — Needlework, which I wiſh particularly to give her a taſte for, as both uſeful and becoming in a woman, ſhall be recommended to her as an agreeable amuſement. —— "Now, my dear," will I ſay to her, "your mind has been long enough fa- "tigued with your leſſons — I will "indulge you in a little relaxation.—— "Sit down by me, my love; —you ſee "I am going to treat you like a wo- "man;——I give you leave to employ "yourſelf as I am employed. —Try if

" you can copy this piece of embroi-
" dery."—I ſhall be careful to take the work from her long ere ſhe is weary of it, that ſhe may return to it with the more reliſh.—She will perhaps intercede with me to let her go on—" No, my " dear; you have been long enough " indulged; we muſt not ſpend our " whole time in amuſement. When " you have learned your other leſſons, as " I have done, you will then, like me, " be at liberty to ſpend as much time " as you pleaſe in this agreeable em-
" ployment."—Will not this naturally produce a fondneſs for it? Nay, will it not quicken her diligence in the other parts of her education, that ſhe may obtain that liberty?

My next care, as ſhe grows older, will be to cultivate her underſtanding, and enlarge her ideas. This will be a more difficult taſk;——for what books can I ſuffer her to peruſe, that, at the ſame

ſame time they recommend virtue, will not alſo make her acquainted with vice? And I do not ſo much want to teach her its deformity, as, for ſome years at leaſt, to keep her totally ignorant of its exiſtence.—I admire the Spectators and Adventurers; but ſhe will therein ſee all her ſex's foibles ſet off indeed in a ridiculous light; and this knowledge is inconſiſtent with my plan.—Yet read ſhe muſt;—for without that, her mind can never be poliſhed or improved.—For the early part of her life, I ſhall furniſh her with Croxal's and Gay's Fables, that may be inſtructive and amuſing; and when ſhe is older, I ſhall ſubmit to my Somerville's judgement, in the choice of thoſe authors he thinks proper for her ſtudy.

The laſt and moſt material article is Religion.—I think it is very injudicious to let children uſe the Bible at ſchool as the firſt book neceſſary to teach them to read. At that time they ſhould have

little books of entertainment, to entice; by which means, learning will become a pleaſure, and not an arduous taſk. As they advance to maturer years, and can begin to digeſt what they read, the Bible will furniſh them with a fund of uſeful knowledge; but, if they are too early teazed and chid over the Scriptures, it may prevent their reading them as an act of choice, when in riper years they chuſe for themſelves. — As ridiculous is it to carry little children to church. It muſt be a puniſhment to them—and of what poſſible advantage can it be? —Its natural conſequence is, to give them a diſguſt to religion—to make them conſider it as a penance—as a taſk.—Beſides, by that means, they gain an imperfect and confuſed idea of it—it is above their comprehenſion then—and afterwards, it is a thouſand to one if ever they trouble their heads about the matter;——but, taking it upon truſt, without examination, content themſelves with doing like

their

their neighbours.—Is this faith?—No, had their parents been infidels, they would have been the same.—Now, the method I propose with Caroline is this.——Till she arrives at a proper age, I shall inculcate no precepts but those of morality, knowing that all the other parts of religion are above her comprehension; but, when of riper judgement, I will one day, kneeling down in her presence, with fervour and solemnity, put up a petition, that her understanding may be enlightened, to comprehend and consider the weight and importance of what I am (as far as I can) going to reveal to her.—This action, so uncommon, will no doubt excite her utmost attention.—She will eagerly demand an explanation.—Then will I, seating her by me, question her on her ideas of the Supreme Being, whom she has ever been taught so highly to revere. I will, as well as I can, describe his attributes and perfections, as discoverable by the light

of nature, and manifeſt in his works.—Then, with a ſolemn air, putting the Bible into her hands—" Read this, my " dear; this will teach you true wiſ- " dom; and, while you are engaged in " that important ſtudy, I will offer up " my daily prayers, that Heaven may " open your heart to know, and receive " with joy, the momentous truths it con- " tains"—I need not now repeat all I ſhall ſay on the occaſion—but I will leave her unbiaſſed judgement to form from it her ideas of religion.—It contains all things neceſſary to ſalvation; and what is needful for us to know is ſo plainly revealed, that, to expreſs myſelf in the ſacred language, *thoſe that run may read.*—— As heavenly truths are adapted to the meaneſt capacity, with what avidity will ſhe peruſe thoſe volumes of inſpiration! How will ſhe be raviſhed and delighted with the joyful proſpects it opens to her! How forcibly will they ſtrike her imagi-

nation!

nation!—It will open to her a new world of wonders.

Thus, my dear Sophy, have I given you a ſlight ſketch of my plan.—It is but a dry ſubject to entertain you with, my ſweet friend; but remember, it was in obedience to your own commands, which I ſhall ever chearfully obey.—Now, my love, tell me freely if you think any part of it exceptionable.—I am ſure you are very capable of improving it; and your judgement ſhall be a law to mine.—— Adieu! I have not leiſure to pour out half the fond effuſions of my heart.—But you know that heart—and that it entertains a friendſhip for my Sophy, which no time nor accident can extinguiſh, nor even diminiſh, ſo ſincerely am I

Yours,

CAROLINE.

LETTER XI.

To Lady Somerville.

"EXCEPTIONABLE!"—— my dear creature—no, far from it! —but think you it is practicable? Or, if ſo, will it anſwer the intended purpoſe?—What a little primitive damſel will our Caroline be, ſhould it ſucceed. —But ah! my ſweet friend, ſo natural is vanity to us poor females, that, take what pains you will, it will find an entrance one way or other. If you ſhut the doors, it will get in at the windows. —And how, you cruel creature, could you have the heart to remove out of your drawing room thoſe pretty ornaments?—What are your viſitors to do? —Is it in nature that they ſhould be able to go through that tedious ceremony

mony without one glance at their own ſweet perſons, to raiſe their drooping ſpirits? — I am quite in pain for them. But I have hit upon an expedient— Their only way will be to have little mirrors on their bracelets inſtead of pictures. They, indeed, will reflect a face in their eyes more lovely than any other, the moſt ingenious limner could place there — and we muſt allow they will be drawn to the life.—Another advantage is, that every one who ſees them will be pleaſed, and ſecretly, however modeſt they may be in their praiſe, will acknowledge they never ſaw a face they liked ſo well. —— The beaux too will be delighted — and often will the fair one's hand be preſs'd to their lips—not for its ſake only, but alſo for the pleaſure of having a glance at their own well-powder'd hair, white teeth, and black eyes — in ſhort, with a view of charms they hold ſo dear—and indeed, the only charm they have to boaſt of. —— One may ſay of moſt of them, like ſomebody

in the fable — "Ah! what a pretty "head is here! what pity it is it has "no brains!" —though indeed, as times go, they make quite as modiſh a figure without them!——

Do, my lovely Caroline, give me a very particular deſcription of your courtly viſitors — it will be charity — for I am quite ruſticated, and ſhould, in my preſent ſtate of ignorance of the Beau Monde, be half afraid to make my appearance 'amongſt you — tho' you know I have promiſed — and oh! how eagerly do I long to fulfil a promiſe from which I expect ſo much happineſs!— Yes, my dear, I hope Heaven will, ere long, indulge my ardent wiſhes, and grant me the felicity of ſeeing you; — but I muſt have patience, mama tells me.— If I muſt, I muſt — at preſent, however, I have very little of that commodity to boaſt of. — Yet, were it not for my poor, good-natur'd, inſignificant, everlaſting

laſting dangler Audley, I ſhould live comfortably enough — *comfortably* is an expreſſive word, and nothing could more conciſely give you an idea of my preſent ſtate of exiſtence; — for, ſince you left me, it has been no more than barely to exiſt — but 'ſquire Audley, as I was ſaying, peſters me to death — I am ſometimes tempted to take the man merely out of revenge — revenge I ſay — for I am woefully miſtaken if the honeſt ſoul would not ſoon be heartily glad to ſlip his neck out of the collar again — Indeed, indeed, my beloved, I fear I ſhould never be able to follow your meek example. I have been ſo long accuſtom'd to be obey'd, that, as I tell the man twenty times a day, he has utterly ruin'd me for that tame domeſtic thing a wife. — But wonderful! — how could I ſo long delay telling you that I have gain'd a new conqueſt ſince you left us! — a flaming conqueſt, I aſſure you! — freſh as imported from Paris! — come from that gay metropolis ſooner then he intended

tended (tho' ſufficiently accompliſh'd already) on the death of his father;—and to Clithero, in order to view his eſtate, which is near us — no inconſiderable one let me tell you;— beſides, he is an immenſe pretty fellow — a beau of the firſt magnitude — dreſſes like an angel — a common compariſon that, and wondrous juſt! — How do angels dreſs? — According to Milton, Raphael at leaſt was habited in the Indian taſte, who have a great *penchant* for feathers — for we are told

" He ſhook his plumes,
" Whoſe heavenly fragrance fill'd the
" circuit wide."———

I can never help forming a fat pluffy idea of the ſaid angel from that deſcription — very applicable to a ſpirit, to be ſure! — in this laſt article, my beau has not the leaſt reſemblance, for he is the mere ſhadow of a man — and yet, little fleſh as he has, he has ſtill leſs ſpirit!

rit! — For the plumes, his dreſs is full as light and gaudy — and as for the fragrance, not all the ſpicy gales of Arabia can waft a ſweeter perfume than that which exhales from his well-ſcented handkerchief. —— 'Tis too much for your mama's weak nerves. — Immediately on his entrance, ſhe is forced to retire with her work — (you know her work and her are inſeparable, dear good notable woman as ſhe is!) in order to enjoy the benefit of leſs courtly air, which ſhe finds (ſtrange unfaſhionable taſte!) more reviving than his more coſtly ſweets. ——

But to go on with my deſcription — he is the gentleſt inſignificant dangler that one could poſſibly deſire — lives but for the ladies; and when in town, it ſeems, is reckon'd a neceſſary part of their equipage. Your mama, Kitty and I, were ſitting this morning in the bow window, they at work, my Ladyſhip reading to them — (my uſual province,

you

you know), when enters Mr. Whiffle, bowing to the ground: "Your moſt "obedient ſlave" — to me — "with "reverence I approach the queen of "Love, ſurrounded by her Graces." — But one of her Graces at moſt! as your mama is rather antient. — But the man was not much out neither, for ſhe is really a graceful old dame.———

"You are very gallant, Mr. Whiffle," return'd I; "and, I proteſt, immenſely "elegant. Your morning dreſs is quite "adorable."——

"Ah! Madam," bowing, "you do "me to much honour. —— *C'eſt ne rien* "*d'extraordinaire.*"——

"Nay, poſitively, Mr. Whiffle, your "hair is dreſs'd to a miracle. Who is "your frizeur?"——

"I brought one from Paris. — 'Tis "impoſſible a perſon of any delicacy can "ſubmit

" ſubmit to the aukward management
" of a clumſy Engliſh fellow!"——

" You ſay well, Mr. Whiffle, a head
" ſo ſoft as yours was never made to be
" ſo roughly handled. But your hair
" is really charming."——

" Do you think ſo Ma'am?" eyeing himſelf in the glaſs. " I have indeed an
" immenſe quantity—a foreſt of hair, as
" the French expreſs it.

" Oh! it is extremely fine," return'd I. He received my juſt compliment, as he thought it, with infinite delight, and again ey'd himſelf with more complacency in the glaſs, as he lean'd over the back of my chair, which ſtood exactly facing that by you, Caroline, deſpiſed (but by him highly valued) ornament.

Kitty now aroſe, with an archneſs in her looks of which I little divined the cauſe, till ſome time after turning to ſpeak

ſpeak to my beau, who was now tripping croſs the apartments, to pay his reſpects to my ſquirrel, what was my ſurprize to ſee his flowing curls now dangling by a ſingle hair, which alone prevented their total deſertion! —— I burſt into a loud laugh. He haſtily faced about, with open mouth, ready to join my mirth, when, with the ſudden jirk, the ſportive locks fluttered to the ground, leaving his deſerted ears naked and expoſed to view. — He ſaw — he felt — the fatal accident; and, clapping up his hands to cover the naked place, dying with confuſion, precipitately left the room.

Kitty now, flinging herſelf back in the chair, indulged in a hearty laugh; nor did I fail to keep her in countenance — even your mama, laying down her ſpecs, gave way to her riſibility.— The conceited creature, ſhe ſaid, was rightly ſerved. He deſerved to be mortified for his vanity. Yet ſhe wiſh'd he could

could have been humbled by any other perſon rather then one of our family.— She fear'd he might be tempted to take ſome ſpiteful revenge. — A young Lady could never be too cautious how ſhe gave an affront to one of the other ſex — they have it but too much in their power to injure her. — "Oh! "never fear, my dear Madam," cry'd I; "the creature has no head-piece in the "world. — Revenge indeed! Lord help "the ſoft ſoul! he might puzzle his "brain to eternity ere he could hit upon "any ſcheme to effect it — I'll anſwer "for the conſequence. The worſt that "can happen will be his abſenting "himſelf from our houſe; and, in "that caſe, I ſhall be highly obliged "to my Kitty for ridding me of his "impertinence."

"You are very good-natured," returned ſhe, ſmiling; "ſome Ladies "would not be ſo apt to pardon me for "depriving them of an adorer; but, to

"make

" make you ſome amends, I freely give
" you the choice of all mine: Pick and
" chuſe, Sophy, and from them ſupply
" his place. I have none, indeed, ſo
" courtly; but, if you can put up with
" quantity inſtead of quality, take half
" a dozen of them.—What ſay you to
" 'ſquire Jones, with his boots, whip,
" and bob-wig;——or to ſpruce Mr.
" Langton, with his long-ſkirted Sunday's
" coat, white gloves, and high-top'd
" ſhoes;——or to the plump and well-
" favoured Bob Jolly, with his round
" unthinking face, and gaping mouth
" from ear to ear?"

" Stop, ſtop," cried I; " I ſhall never
" be able to fix my choice amidſt ſo
" many tempting creatures, whoſe merits
" are ſo nearly on a par."

As I ſpoke, enter mama, handed in by her favourite Audley, ſhe ſo ſimpering, ſo pleaſed, he ſo formal, ſo obſequious,

quious, ſideling up to me, delighted with having, as he thought, ſo gracefully acquitted himſelf, and with an air which ſeemed to ſay, "There, now, what ſay "you to that? you ſee I can gallant a "Lady as well as the beſt of them!" He bowed, rubbed his hands, ſtroked his ruffles.——"A fine day, Ma'am, a "very fine day indeed!"

"Amazing!" cried I, "what won-"derful news!—but you love to deal in "the marvellous."—"Madam!" ſtareing.—"Sir!" laughing.

"Really, Miſs Southern," ſaid he, in a huff, "there is no talking to you, "you make one look ſo like a fool, "with your provoking ſmartneſs."

"Don't pay me a compliment which "I am ſo little intitled to; 'tis to na-"ture alone you are indebted."

"I

" I underſtand you, Ma'am," bowing;——then affecting a careleſs air, which, honeſt man! fits but aukwardly on him, he turned to Kitty: " You are " very ingenious, Madam; your work " is extremely pretty."

" Unpin it, my dear," ſaid I; " no- " body is a better judge of thoſe kind " of matters than Mr. Audley. I hope " ere long to ſee him profit by my ad- " vice, and have him come to make one " in our working-parties, his knotting " in his pocket. Pity ſo pretty a genius " ſhould be loſt for want of employ- " ment!"

The man coloured with reſentment— " 'Tis as great a pity, Madam, that " ſome people are intruſted with ſo dan- " gerous a talent as wit, without having " likewiſe judgement to direct it."

" Thank

"Thank you, Sir," curtſying—"but "why, if you diſlike my wit, are you "thus continually putting yourſelf in "the way of it? for, tho' I may per- "haps think you a very fit object to "exerciſe it on, yet there are people "enough to excite my raillery, and I "can eaſily diſpenſe with your Wor- "ſhip."—"But I," ſaid he, aiming at my hand, "cannot diſpenſe with your "Ladyſhip, cruel as you are.——Oh! "Miſs Southern," with a ſigh as long as my arm, "how can you thus take "pleaſure in giving pain to the man "who adores you?"

"Becauſe idolatry is forbidden," ſaid I, "and, were I to encourage you in it, "I ſhould be a ſharer in your crime. "Am I not very good to have ſo much "tenderneſs for your ſoul, however "little I may have for your body, to "take the pains I do to cure you of "that ſin?"—"Not for one moment?" cried

cried he. " Surely you might for one " moment be ſerious on a ſubject—"

" A ſubject!" interrupted I, " which, " of all things in life, is moſt apt to pro- " duce a contrary effect.—But, once for " all, let me tell you I do not intend, if I " can poſſibly help it, to be ſerious for " at leaſt twenty years to come. If you " can have patience till then—and I " think I have taken ſome trouble to " teach you that uſeful virtue——why " then, Sir, I may perhaps liſten to you " with proper gravity, and as much ſo- " lemnity as your ſuit demands; and, if " you have ſuch a violent ſtock of love " as you pretend, with proper manage- " ment, you may eaſily ſpin it out till " then.—After marriage, you know, it " is a uſeleſs commodity, quite out of " faſhion; and we ſhall, like the reſt of " our neighbours, jog on very com- " fortably without it.—It would be ri- " diculous to take you now with ſuch a

" violent

" violent ſtock upon your hands; —no,
" no, exhauſt it firſt—twenty years—a
" mere trifle—a man might go through
" that term of probation, with a very
" moderate ſhare of conſtancy:——

" The Patriarch, to gain a wife
" Chaſte, beautiful, and young,
" Serv'd fourteen years a painful life,
" And never thought it long."

Interrupting me, and taking my hand with an air not ungraceful, he repeated the laſt two lines:

" And were you to reward my pains,
" And time ſo long would ſtay,
" Not fourteen, but four hundred years
" Would ſeem but one ſhort day."

In return for this pretty compliment, though borrowed, he was permitted the felicity of preſſing that hand to his lips. ——This put him in high ſpirits. The

man talked away. What he ſaid, Lord knows; but I was tolerably complaiſant, though not over attentive. —— Our ſage mamas winked at each other through their ſpectacles, and nodded their ſagacious heads; as much as to ſay, "Aye, "aye, let him alone to plead his cauſe." The honeſt dames judged of me by themſelves, and thought it not in nature to reſiſt ſuch eloquence. Who knows but they wiſh themſelves in my place?—Though I think both your good mother and mine have made a cruel reſolution, notwithſtanding neither of them allow more than fifty years to have gone over their heads, that they will never (dainty widows as they are) know a ſecond Lord, fearing, perhaps, as the ſang ſays—

"He ſhould ne'er be like their auld
"good-man."

But, while this ſubject is upon the tapis, let me aſk how does your elegant Lord

Lord and Maſter? Be very minute, my ſweet Caroline; tell me all that paſſes in your heart. —— Need I ſay you may truſt me? Ah! you know mine, and that it is wholly yours. —— Adieu. —— Your mama is in good ſpirits, and perfect health. Mine ſends you her beſt reſpects; ſo does Kitty, who admires and truly loves you.—Adieu, adieu, my ſweet friend. The poſt-man is come for my letter.

Dear, dear creature,

Believe me ever yours,

SOPHY.

LETTER XII.

To SOPHY.

OH! my dear ſprightly friend, how agreeably did your laſt charming letter entertain me! I have not, ſince I came to this (to me) diſagreeable town, met with any thing that has ſo truely produced that effect. —— I have a large circle of acquaintance, but how few whom I can regard in the engaging light of friends! that I can treat with an eaſy and agreeable familiarity! —All here is buſtle, and empty parade. Laſt Tueſday two of my Lord's relations did me the honour to pay me a viſit. Curioſity, I believe, was their principal motive for this condeſcenſion.——Some of his family are not yet reconciled to his marriage; but about that he little concerns

cerns himſelf. — One of thoſe who condeſcended to viſit me was his aunt, Lady Brathwait—the other, not ſo nearly related. — My Lord, that I might not be fluttered by their coming upon me unexpectedly, informed me in the morning of their intention, and deſired I would dreſs myſelf to the beſt advantage; but added——kindly preſſing my hand between his——"dreſſed or not dreſſed, "they muſt be blind not to approve "my choice." —He went out.—As we were not yet out of our laſt mourning for his father, I was limited as to ornaments. Yet I ſpent more time than uſual at my toilet—tho' at all times ſtudious to render myſelf as agreeable as I poſſibly can in the eyes of my Somerville. 'Tis a laudable ambition, and even our duty.——Thoſe Ladies greatly miſtake their true intereſt, who think it no longer neceſſary to dreſs after marriage, at leaſt not for their huſbands.— I was formerly rather too negligent in

that point; but, were you now to ſee the pains I beſtow on my perſon, you would be apt to believe me extremely vain. I always loved neatneſs; but you would now think I carried my nicety, in regard to cleanlineſs, almoſt to exceſs.—No, my dear, that is impoſſible, if we would wiſh to pleaſe a man of delicacy like my dear Somerville. There are a thouſand other little punctilios, of which I think it becoming and neceſſary to be extremely obſervant.—The generality of wives are, I fear, too unmindful of them.—For one thing, I never either dreſs or undreſs before my dear Lord and Maſter. He never ſees me in an unbecoming diſhabille.—No man would be ſooner diſguſted at any indelicacy of that kind.—But where am I rambling?—not far from my ſubject—it was dreſs, I think—mine that day was black ſattin——my hair French'd, for I have been obliged to comply with the faſhion, in ſpite of my partiality for my

auburn

auburn locks — my linen, and all that, you may eaſily imagine, was elegant, and in taſte. — Thus equipped, I waited in the drawing-room for my expected gueſts. —— At length a thundering rap anounced their arrival — A ſervant entered —— "Lady Braithwait, Miſs Anſtruther, and Miſs Wallgrove." —— I aroſe —— In ſwam the Ladies, my Lord following. He gracefully introduced them to me. — The proper compliments over, we took our ſeats, the Ladies eyeing me from head to foot, my whole attention engroſſed by Miſs Wallgrove — Never did I behold ſo ſtriking a beauty. I believe nobody has leſs envy; yet, at that moment, I could not ſuppreſs a kind of uneaſy ſenſation, which the ſight of her charms produced, cauſed by my apprehenſion leſt my Somerville ſhould be tempted to make compariſons between her and me, which muſt unavoidably have been to my diſadvantage. —— He had, I found, never ſeen her before.

She was but juſt returned from the ſouth of France, where ſhe had accompanied Lady Wallgrove her mama, for the benefit of her health, who, however, died there; and having likewiſe loſt her father ſome years before, ſhe is now in poſſeſſion of a large fortune, and uncontrouled miſtreſs of herſelf.—As there had always been a great intimacy between Lady Braithwaite and her mother, ſhe has been prevailed on to ſpend ſome months this winter at her houſe. It is in conſequence of that viſit I was honoured with her company.

Now, let me give you a faint character of my new aunt and couſin.—The former is a dowager between forty and fifty; and, as you, my dear, would expreſs yourſelf, plump, tho' I cannot add well-favoured.—She has a fiery complexion, pert little eyes, a mouth, the natural form of which gives a kind of diſdainful air to her countenance, though ſhe can,

upon

upon occaſion, aſſume the moſt gracious ſmile. — There is, however, three expreſſive wrinkles juſt between her eyebrows, which ſometimes gives the lye to the lower part of her face, and tells one that to affect thoſe ſmiles is to put a conſtraint on her nature.—This good Lady is one of thoſe extraordinary women, who never did or ſaid a fooliſh thing in their lives. She was, if one would take her word for it, in the marriage ſtate, a pattern for wives; and Sir Simon her late Lord, or rather huſband, was ſo thoroughly ſenſible of her wonderful merit and ſagacity, that he wiſely ſubmitted the whole management of affairs, and himſelf into the bargain, to a wife ſo formed for government. She acquitted herſelf to admiration: No woman of her rank was half ſo notable; nobody looked more into the buſineſs of their family; nobody ſcolded their ſervants with a better grace; and, to crown all, nobody knew ſo well how to rule a

husband, or to keep him in proper ſubjection; and, ſince ſhe has loſt her poor dear Sir Simon, as with tears in her eyes ſhe always calls him, nobody does more honour to the widow'd ſtate. She has, I am told, made no raſh vow to continue in it; yet whether it is the extreme prudence of her conduct—or that knowing her extraordinary merit, they dare not aſpire to her — in ſhort, whatever is the cauſe, ſpite of her large jointure, none have yet ventured to attempt conſoling her, by offering themſelves as a ſecond for the loſs of her firſt husband. —— So much for the widow. ——

Now for the ſpinſter —— Miſs Anſtruther is—I had it from good authority, namely herſelf, who certainly was moſt capable of giving me a true information — juſt turn'd of thirty — tho', as ſhe juſtly added, "her late indiſpoſition "would tempt a ſtranger to believe ſhe "was much older — but" continued ſhe with

with a ſmile, " people at my time of life " have no reaſon to conceal their age; " that is a foible of which for ſome " years at leaſt, I ſhall be in little dan- " ger of yielding to." —— This converſation, no very agreeable one as I could obſerve to the maiden Lady, was introduced by the widow's mentioning ſome remarkable event, which happened about thirty years ago, and turning to Miſs Anſtruther, "You, Couſin, muſt " I am ſure remember it. I think it " happen'd much about the time you " left ſchool." ——

You may judge the effect this ſpeech produced in the ſtately Virgin, who wants not the addition of reſentment, to render her long lean ſallow face more diſagreeable. — Sallow it is to exceſs, owing, I ſuppoſe, to her late indiſpoſition, which, by her account, has a great deal to anſwer for. — What ſhe wants, however, in perſonal charms, is abundantly ſupply'd by the extraordinary

graces of her mind.—She piques herſelf on her uncommon underſtanding, the delicacy of her ſentiments, and her profound erudition.—What foils were theſe two to the lovely delicate blooming Wallgrove, whoſe manner is enchantingly graceful, and converſation in the higheſt degree engaging!—no affectation, no ſelf-ſufficient airs, tho' it is impoſſible ſhe ſhould be inſenſible of her charms. She betrays not, however, any unbecoming vanity. There is an inſinuating modeſty in her deportment, that is quite irreſiſtible.—— In ſhort, Sophy—for I ſhall tire you with encomiums—'tis impoſſible to behold her without admiration and love—I found myſelf ambitious to rank her in the number of my friends, and ſpared no pains to render myſelf agreeable.—She appeared no leſs deſirous to recommend herſelf to my favour. She examined my perſon with great attention, but that with looks of complacency; nor was my Somerville's neglected. Her eyes—

ah!

ah! what lovely eyes!—involuntarily, as it were, wandered from him to me, while Miſs Anſtruther was endeavouring to engage him in a very learned diſſertation on the beauties of poetry, and the ſuperiority of the antients over the moderns.—He liſten'd, with arch ſmiles; but it did not prevent his frequently addreſſing himſelf to the charming Wallgrove, who happen'd to ſit next him, and to whom he paid a great number of delicate compliments, with which ſhe did not ſeem diſpleaſed.—How could ſhe?—No man in the world has a more engaging, a more inſinuating addreſs.——She affected, however, to turn them into raillery; yet that does not appear to be a talent in which ſhe is ſtudious to excel.—She has more ſweetneſs and good ſenſe, than wit or vivacity; yet is ſhe ſufficiently lively.—The tea equipage was brought in—Miſs Anſtruther never drinks any; and her prejudice againſt it has lately been ſtrengthen'd by the peruſal of a very learned

learned diſſertation on its dangerous effects. Thoſe effects ſhe with ſufficient energy of language pointed out to us, while with great compoſure we were ſipping it, in ſpite of her lectures.——

" Nothing, I ſuppoſe," ſaid my Lord ſmiling, " will go down with a Lady of " your extraordinary taſte and genius, " but the inſpiring waters of Helicon " or the Nectar of the Gods."—Really," returned ſhe, ſimpering, " tho' I do not " pretend to ſet up for a Poeteſs; yet " thoſe little flights of fancy with which " I ſometimes entertain my friends would " ſoon be dampt were I to indulge my- " ſelf in that pernicious herb, which is " ſo deſtructive to one's ſpirits, ſo apt " to engender ſpleen and melancholy."

" Then you do write?" cry'd his Lordſhip archly.——

" Ah! Lord! Sir, what have I ſaid?" —aiming at a bluſh, and affectedly playing with her fan.

" This

" This pretty diffidence is extremely " becoming," resumed he drolly ; " but " amongst friends, who are prepared to " admire your performances, I hope " you will endeavour to get the better of it and honour us with——"

" O Heavens!" interrupted she, " you " are so pressing — but, upon my word, " I have nothing about me worth your " seeing — (his Lordship's countenance seemed to say " That I verily believe") " only the first blotted copy of a short " Pastoral I last week wrote, while on " a visit to my dear friend Lady W. " Indeed the season is unfavourable for " a work of that nature—as the tufted " groves, flowery meads, and rising hills, " have lost their verdure."——

" But a genius like yours, Madam," said he, " would exert itself in spite of " all these disadvantages ; and, tho' " summer no longer blooms, you might " have exercised it in drawing a winter " piece."——

" I did

" I did make an attempt of that na-
" ture," returned ſhe, taking out her pocket-book; adding, with a ſimper, " thoſe who have ſeen it have been " very complaiſant—Mr. Eaſy ſays, — " but perhaps," hiding her face with her fan, " he is a little partial—that is one " misfortune attending us females, and " for which I have often wiſh'd myſelf " of the other ſex, one is addreſs'd with " ſo much flattery—really, if I had not " a tolerable underſtanding, the men are " ſo teazing on this head — and yet I ſee " nothing in myſelf ſo very extraordi-
" nary. — But the generality of young " Ladies are now a-days ſo trifling and " inſignificant, that, when they meet " with one who has any pretenſions to " genius, ſhe is regarded as a kind of " prodigy. I declare I don't know " whether it would not be better for one " to be more on a level with the reſt of " one's ſex; one is apt to create a " kind of awe, a ſort of a — but " there, my Lord," giving him the paper.

paper. " I proteſt I am half afraid of " your criticiſm — 'tis ſo blotted too — " I believe I had better read it my- " ſelf."——

My Lord, hardly able to keep his countenance, bowing, return'd it to her. —He durſt not truſt himſelf to make her any anſwer. — She cough'd, hem'd, and waving her hand, in a loud ſhrill voice read her delectable piece.—— Sorry am I that I have ſo ſhort a memory, or I would have ſent it you, tho' at the peril of making you die with laughing. —Never any thing on earth was half ſo fooliſh or abſurd.—On finiſhing, ſhe looked round to us for approbation. — I was ſilent, for I really could not prevail on myſelf to praiſe her at the expence of my ſincerity—nor could I help condemning my Lord for carrying his raillery ſo far as to load her with encomiums.——

" You

" You are very obliging, Sir ;" ſaid ſhe, highly delighted with his groſs flattery ; " but indeed I have before been " told it has ſome little merit. I re- " ceive great advantage from having " ſtudied men as well as books."——

" I wiſh to Heaven," thought I, " you " would likewiſe beſtow a little time in " ſtudying yourſelf".——

" Come, come," cried Lady Braithwait, vex'd to be ſo long kept ſilent, " enough of this, good Cuz, you " really tire one ; I believe I have heard " that ſame Paſtoral, as you call it, a " hundred times at leaſt."

" This is always the way, my Lord," ſaid Miſs Anſtruther in a half w hiſper ; " Lady Brathwait is in ſome reſpects a " ſenſible woman, but has not the leaſt " taſte for poetry. She is in that reſpect " almoſt as ſtupid as Miſs Wallgrove— " would you believe it," continued ſhe, " I offer'd her a copy of my little miſcel-

" laneous

" laneous collection; and what do you
" think was her anſwer? that ſhe has
" already more poetry in her library
" than ſhe ſhould ever read; adding,
" ſhe hoped I would not be offended;
" that, little as ſhe appear'd by that to
" value thoſe authors, ſhe ſhould yet
" give them the preference to mine,
" ſince I had taught her to ſet a higher
" value on the antients than the mo-
" derns."——

Here Lady Braithwait interrupted her, by asking if ſhe might not be favour'd with a ſight of my daughter, adding, ſhe would give me ſome inſtruction in regard to her education.——I bow'd, and order'd my Caroline to be brought in; determined, however, that ſhe ſhould make but a ſhort viſit. Mean while her Ladyſhip began, with a ſelf-ſufficient air, to give me ſome of thoſe inſtructions. " Nobody," ſhe ſaid, " better underſtood thoſe things than " herſelf. She had loſt a little girl, who,

" had

" had ſhe lived, wou'd, ſhe made no " doubt, have, by her care, been in " every female accompliſhment a pattern " for her ſex.—Her poor dear Sir " Simon uſed to ſay, there never was " ſuch a woman, nothing came amiſs " to her, ſhe was not a more excellent " wife than mother."—I believe not.—

Miſs Anſtruther hoped I would early give her a taſte for poetry; nothing ſo much refined and exalted the ſentiments; ſhe would indeed herſelf take ſome pains with her on that head; while the charming Wallgrove, ſmiling at theſe originals, only complain'd that the ſervant was too ſlow in obeying my command.—" She " long'd," ſhe ſaid, " to ſee the lovely " creature, for lovely ſhe was convinced " ſhe muſt be, if ſhe reſembled her " ſweet mama;" at the ſame time, by a glance at my Lord, ſhe ſeemed to include him in the compliment.—I bow'd a return—and his eyes ſpoke him ſenſible of the favour.—Nurſe now enter'd with

with the ſmiling Cherub.— I motion'd for her to carry her to Lady Braithwait. —She condeſcended to kiſs her forehead. "Very like her father!" ſaid ſhe; "but, my dear Lady Somerville, how "prepoſterouſly have you dreſs'd her! "Why, ſhe's all of a heap! I have "no notion of children not wearing "ſtays any more than their mothers. "'Tis an odious, an indelicate faſhion, "and it quite ruins the ſhape when "it is thus ſuffer'd to grow at random. "I now was laced up from my infancy; "and you ſee, tho' I ſay it, few people "have a more eaſy genteel waiſt.—— "Poor Sir Simon uſed to ſay, that, "when he firſt married me, he could "almoſt ſpan it. I am now indeed a "little more corpulent; but I ſhould be "out of all ſize were I to dreſs myſelf "like the ſlovens of the preſent age. "Were they but to hear what the men "ſay of their flatternly odious mode "of daudling themſelves out, they "would quickly change their plan."

During

During this harangue, Miſs Wallgrove caught the child in her arms, and ran away with it to a window, where ſhe almoſt ſtifled it with kiſſes. — My Lord follow'd. — "Oh! the little angel!" cry'd ſhe, "how, my Lord, can you "ever bear to have it a moment out "of your ſight?" She preſs'd it again to her fair boſom — Lady Braithwait ſtill continued her lecture, to which however I did not give all the attention ſhe could wiſh — my eyes, and ears too, were otherwiſe employ'd. — "Happy creature!" return'd his Lordſhip — "well may it ſmile, and thus delighted "throw its little arms around the moſt "charming neck in the world. — By "my ſoul, Madam, I cannot without "envy ſee you thus laviſh on it thoſe "tender careſſes."——

"Go," cried ſhe, "none of your "raillery, leave me to entertain my "ſweet prattler. — Do you love me, my "dear? ſhall I be your mama?"—Taking her

her hand, he whiſper'd ſomething—what I know not—but Miſs Wallgrove turn'd from him with a bluſh. I, on the contrary, felt myſelf turn pale, without rightly knowing the cauſe of my diſagreeable emotion —ſurely I am not —Heaven forbid I ſhould — ſubject to jealouſy — Oh! I ſhall cautiouſly guard my heart againſt the entrance of that tormenting paſſion.——

She now carry'd the child to Miſs Auſtruther, and offer'd to put it into her arms. — The prim creature ſtep'd back. "Keep it, Madam; 'tis in very "good hands, nobody is fonder of "children than I am; but 'tis no eaſy "matter for a perſon of underſtanding "to accommodate themſelves to theirs." —So ſaying, ſhe reſumed her ſeat with a mighty ſtately air. — Woe be to the ſweet creatures, thought I, if nobody is fonder of them than this ſtarch'd ſpinſter. — "Come then, my Lord," cry'd Miſs Wallgrove, "let me have

" the pleaſure of ſeeing her in yours,
" ſince Miſs Anſtruther declines the
" honour. — I want to know what kind
" of nurſe you'll make. — Don't think
" it below your dignity; it requires, let
" me tell you, a peculiar art to acquit
" one's ſelf gracefully; and you are too
" accompliſh'd a gentleman not to be
" ambitious to excel, even in trifles."
—He took my Caroline—and fervently preſſing her cheek—" There, Madam," return'd he, with a kind of tender ſmile as I thought it—" I have robbed her
" of half a hundred of your ſweet
" kiſſes" —— This ſcene was not, I
" own, in the leaſt amuſing to me.—
" Take her away, nurſe," ſaid I; " I
" fear, my Lord, ſhe is troubleſome
" to you.——"

" No, upon my word," cried Miſs Wallgrove, " ſhe does not appear to be
" ſo; he really acquits himſelf better
" than I expected, conſidering he is but
" a young

" a young father, and conſequently not " much accuſtom'd to the buſineſs.— "

He ſmiled; and, taking her hand, if " I have acquitted myſelf tolerably," return'd he gallantly, " I have profited " by your example — Oh! Miſs Wall- " grove," added he, fixing his eyes on her face, " what a lovely mother will " you make! — Happy the man"——

" Far happier the husband of this " dear Lady," interrupted ſhe, kindly preſſing my hand — " indeed you ap- " pear worthy of each other."——

" That Heaven may render me ſo," reſumed his Lordſhip, putting his arm round my waiſt, " is my ſincere wiſh."

Tears ruſh'd into my eye. — I endeavour'd to diſperſe them—it was very fooliſh, for what reaſon had I to weep?— But his obliging tenderneſs at that time had a more than common effect on me;

and I have not yet learn'd the modiſh art of concealing the feelings of my heart. I believe he ſaw it — I am ſorry he did, I thought — or perhaps I only fear'd — he did not look pleaſed.— I hope it was a groundleſs apprehenſion. — The Ladies ſoon after took leave.— Miſs Wallgove, with a voice and manner uncommonly perſuaſive, begg'd we might be very intimate: —— "She "ſhould," ſhe ſaid, "highly value my "friendſhip, and hoped I would permit "her to regard me in that light. We "will," added ſhe, "viſit each other "without form. — I deteſt ceremony. "—You, I am told, are not very fond of "public places; no more am I. — I "flatter myſelf you will find I have in "many things a ſimilarity of taſte."— Did ſhe at that moment look at my Lord, Sophy? — or did I only imagine it? — "We ſhall therefore," continued ſhe, "have a great deal of leiſure to ſee each "other. Believe me, nothing this gay

"town

" town can afford will to me be half ſo " agreeable."——She curtſey'd—I returned the compliment.——Away ſhe trip'd —— my Lord following, to hand her to her carriage.

I retired to my dreſſing-room, where he ſoon after joined me; throwing himſelf into a chair—" What a couple of " original old ſouls is that aunt and " couſin of mine!" ſaid he, " I declare, " had it not been for Miſs Wallgrove, " they would, in ſpite of the, civility, " which, as Ladies and relations they " are intitled to, have driven me out of " the houſe.—Their characters are too " ridiculouſly ſtupid even to excite one's " mirth."

" But," returned I, " the lovely, the " amiable Miſs Wallgrove's engaging " converſation made, as you muſt al- " low, ample amends for their ſtupi- " dity."

" She is very agreeable," cried he, careleſsly.

" Agreeable! my Lord, ſurely you " muſt think her more than barely agree- " able!—I never beheld ſo fine a crea- " ture."

" Do you think ſo?" —without look- ing at me.

" Why, does not your Lordſhip think " ſo too?"

" You ſeem, my dear," cried he, ſmiling, to be in a catechiſing hu- " mour."

I bluſh'd—" A catechiſing humour! " my Lord; it is not the firſt time I " have aſked your opinion of the Ladies " who viſit us; but I think it is the firſt " time you ever gave that name to my " que-

" queſtion. I hope you are not offended
" at what may perhaps have appeared
" impertinent."

" Madam!"—colouring in his turn—
" Dear Sir," trembling, and taking his hand, " you are not angry. I would
" not for the world "——" My dear," rather peeviſhly, " you are too appre-
" henſive. Am I then ſuch a tyrant?"

" A tyrant, my amiable Somerville,
" O Heavens!—But I will retire, and
" recollect myſelf; I am ſure you would
" not ſpeak with that unkind accent, if
" I had not done ſomething amiſs."

" You have not, you could not, my
" gentle Caroline," ſaid he, taking my hand; " compoſe yourſelf." He ſeated me on a couch, and took his place by me—I durſt not look up—my heart was full.—He fixed his eyes—his penetrating

eyes on me, for ſome moments.—At laſt, "You are uneaſy, Caroline; ſomething "is labouring in your breaſt, which "you ſeem fearful to diſcloſe. Am I "not your friend?——ſpeak freely to "me."

"Ah! my Lord," looking tenderly on him, "that faithful breaſt harbours "not one thought or deſire it would "wiſh to conceal from you."

"Come, ſhall I gueſs?" cried he, ſmiling.—"You think I took too much "notice of Miſs Wallgrove;—but, my "dear, as I believed you free from al-"moſt all your ſex's foibles, ſo I ima-"gined jealouſy—the worſt, the moſt "deſtructive to a woman's happineſs, "and the moſt apt to alienate her huſ-"band's affections——was equally a "ſtranger to that gentle boſom."

"Jea-

" Jealouſy, my Lord! — Good Hea-
" vens! what have I ſaid or done to
" excite a ſuſpicion ſo injurious?"

" Come, come, my dear creature, we
" are none of us perfect — Miſs Wall-
" grove is handſome—I was polite."

" And have you ſo very mean an
" opinion of me?" interrupted I, rather diſdainfully.——" Oh! my Lord, how
" little do you yet know me! —— but
" ſurely," continued I, with ſome ſpirit,
" if you had not been conſcious of
" giving ſome cauſe, you could not,
" from what I have ſaid, have made ſo
" cruel, ſo unjuſt an inference."

" Take care, Madam," cried he, a little reſentfully, " or what was only
" meant in raillery will become ſerious.
" —Remember this—I will not be con-
" trouled. — I love you; and you have

" every day hitherto appeared more and
" more worthy of my eſteem: But, if
" ever you begin to ſuſpect me—if ever
" you doubt the continuance of that love
" —— from that moment you will in-
" deed have cauſe — for, of all things
" on earth," added he, with warmth,
" nothing to me would be ſo odious as
" a jealous wife. Were you once to
" aſſume that character, I will not an-
" ſwer to what lengths it might drive
" me. I ſhould deteſt my home, and
" fly to any amuſement, any diſſipation,
" rather than be there.—At preſent, be
" aſſured, I love you above all women;
" —but I muſt likewiſe aſſure you, I
" will admire beauty wherever I ſee it;
" that I will pay it that regard, that
" homage, it ſo juſtly merits.—I meant
" not, when I commenced huſband, to
" commence clown alſo, nor to be
" abridged of my innocent liberties. I
" have been accuſtomed to treat your
" ſex

" ſex with reſpect; nor muſt you expect
" that my politeneſs and attention ſhould
" be wholly confined to my wife, tho'
" ſhe ſhall ever have the preference,
" both in my heart and my eſteem, as
" long as by her amiable and obliging
" behaviour ſhe merits that diſtinction—
" but not one moment longer, by Hea-
" ven."

What a lecture was here, my dear Sophy!—Wiping my eyes, for I could not refrain from tears, I took his hand, and preſſing it to my lips, " Your wife,
" my beloved Somerville, will ever
" ſtudy to deſerve the continuance of
" that affection and eſteem ſhe ſo
" highly, ſo juſtly values, and never,
" never ſhall you find her a jealous
" one.—No, I am charmed with your
" graceful politeneſs. I triumph in be-
" ing the choice of a man by every one
" ſo much approved. Oh! my Lord,

" far am I from diſcouraging that ge-
" neral, that agreeable gallantry of be-
" haviour, for which you are ſo emi-
" nently diſtinguiſhed; and were I ever,
" which," added I, again wiping my eyes, " Heaven forbid, by any fault of
" mine, or the natural inconſtancy of
" the human heart, to grow indifferent
" to my Lord and huſband, yet never
" would I reproach him, never ſhould
" he be troubled with my fruitleſs com-
" plaints; for, alas! too well I know
" they would be fruitleſs, and only
" ſerve to widen the breach, ſince I am
" convinced a heart once loſt is never
" to be regained.—But, now we are
" on this truely melancholy ſubject," continued I, " let me requeſt one fa-
" vour—Treat me as a friend. Friend-
" ſhip, at leaſt, may continue, though
" a warmer paſſion ceaſes.—If ever the
" fatal time ſhould come, when I am no
" longer the object of your love, do not

" en-

" endeavour to deceive me (ah, it will be
" impoſſible) by an affected tenderneſs;
" but tell me frankly — " Alas! Caro-
" line, you are no longer dear to me;
" in vain have I ſtruggled with my re-
" fractory emotions; the feelings of the
" heart are involuntary; I wiſh mine
" had been formed with more con-
" ſtancy; but who can reſiſt nature?
" My poor Caroline, I cannot help it;
" but I confeſs I am no longer your
" lover, though I will ever continue
" your friend." ——Then, my Lord, I
" may die with grief, but never will I
" upbraid you."

" Thou ſweet romantic girl!" cried he, preſſing me to his breaſt, " how
" you ſoften me!—But that curſed mo-
" ment, if ever it is to arrive, is yet
" far, far diſtant — No more, then, I
" beſeech you, on this horrid ſubject."

" Only one word more," ſaid I, throwing my arms about his neck, and reclining my head on his boſom, " give " me your promiſe, if that curſed mo- " ment, as you juſtly call it, ſhould ar- " rive, that you will do what I deſire; " as I ſhall never more, if I can help it, " renew this hateful ſubject, ſo let us " ſettle that to me important point. " Oh! I could not ſubmit to be the ob- " ject of your feigned tenderneſs. I " have ſome pride; it ſhall be to de- " ſerve it—but I cannot bear the mor- " tifying thought of your aſſuming the " appearance, when I no longer excite " the reality."

" Dear creature!" ſaid he, " you " are very mindful of futurity; but I " do promiſe you," kiſſing my fore- head; " and in return be equally in- " genuous with me; never harbour a " ſecret jealouſy in your breaſt, never

" drop

" drop any diſtant hints, nor ſlyly cate-
" chize me, as I falſely imagined you
" were doing juſt now. Let all artifice,
" all mean diſſimulation, be baniſhed; and
" let us be open ſincere friends, as well
" as affectionate lovers." Again kindly embracing me, he aroſe——put on his ſword. — While he was doing ſo, I felt ſome curioſity to know where he was going—but no queſtions aſked I, as you may well imagine. He took up his hat, " My aunt," ſaid he, careleſsly, " en-
" gaged me to ſup with her. It is a cere-
" mony I would much rather have been
" excuſed from, but I could not refuſe
" her preſſing invitation. Don't ſit up
" for me, my dear; that is one of thoſe
" inſtances of kindneſs in a wife, which
" I——and indeed I believe moſt huſ-
" bands—would readily diſpenſe with
" —I don't exactly know when I ſhall
" return; but I know the good Lady,
" amongſt her other perfections, has

" that

" that faſhionable one——a taſte for " gaming:——So it may perhaps be " late."—He turned, and ſurveyed himſelf in the glaſs.—No glaſs ever reflected a more graceful, a more charming figure. Then, ſmiling, and patting my cheek, " Good night; ſend for your little Ca- " roline; ſhe will help to amuſe you in " my abſence."

Away he went, careleſsly whiſtling as he tript down ſtairs.—His chariot was at the door. He threw himſelf into it. " Drive faſt," ſaid he—I heard him as I ſtood at the window.—He was out of ſight in a moment——I did not take his advice in ſending for my child, but ſat down to converſe with my no leſs dear Sophy.—But now adieu. I muſt likewiſe write to mama, though my hand is already cramped to death. Excuſe me, my dear; you will never have patience to read this enormous packet; but I ought

ought not to add to its length by making apologies. Don't ſhow it to my beloved mother. It may perhaps make her uneaſy——Adieu, adieu, and good night.

My ſweet friend,

Ever yours,

CAROLINE.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

To Lady SOMERVILLE.

LEST my beloved friend ſhould be uneaſy at my long ſilence, I will write, tho' it ſhould be but two lines.—I have time for no more—my dear mama is ill—very ill, I fear.—Good Heavens! was I ever perverſe?—Ah! I have but too often made her uneaſy—yet it was from a conſtitutional levity—not ill-nature, or want of affection.—But, for all that, I cannot now help reproaching myſelf.—If ſhe recovers, I am poſitively determined to change my conduct—nay, I verily believe, were ſhe, in the humour I am now in, while the low-ſpirited fit is upon me, to preſs me on a certain ſubject—I verily believe, I ſay—I ſhould be

be all meekneſs and obedience; and, making one of my beſt curtſeys, thank the honeſt man for giving me an opportunity to oblige my dear mother.—How tender ſhould we be in our behaviour to our parents! or how ſeverely will it affect a perſon of any ſenſibility to reflect, when they have loſt them, that they have made ſo ungrateful a return for all their trouble and fond affection!—This, I truſt, will not be my caſe, for I have always loved this dear parent—but now I am in danger of loſing her, I love her with redoubled tenderneſs.—Adieu, my friend; my whole time ought and ſhall be dedicated to her, till my ardent prayers are anſwered, and ſhe is once more reſtored to health and happineſs.

Your dear mama is inexpreſſibly obliging on this, and indeed on all occaſions.—She will not leave me while in this diſtreſs.——Kitty is an excellent nurſe.

nurſe.—I am the moſt uſeleſs perſon in the houſe—but though I do little, nobody feels more.——That huſband of yours, my dear—would I had the management of him!—a ſtately wretch!—But you do very well—a little ſpirit now and then is not amiſs—but more of this when at liberty to indulge my prating vein.—Farewel, my deareſt.—Love me ever, for none can love you more than

Your

SOPHY.

P. S. Let me have a journal of all you do and think.—Write to me every moment——you have leiſure for the employment. Never mind form or connexion. Two or three lines at a time, as you pleaſe—but, at the week's end, do not fail to ſend me a packet.—— That Miſs

What's-

What's-her-name lives with Lady Braithwait, I think you ſay.——I don't like her.—Say what you will, it is a conceited little minx, ſay I told you ſo.—A fig for her friendſhip—ſhe ſhan't be your friend.—Nay, I much fear ſhe will not in the end prove herſelf ſo.—Yet beware of jealouſy—nor for your life indulge that hateful, that tormenting paſſion——but you have more good ſenſe.—A ſhort letter—but a poſtſcript as long as my milliner's bill!——Adieu! if I had not been ſummoned, I know not, as your man ſays, to what lengths—ſtop'd in the middle of my ſentence. Adieu!

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

To SOPHY.

YOUR mama is ill.—Dear, dear Sophy, how I pity you!—Do not alarm yourſelf.——Mine aſſures me, there is no appearance of danger at preſent.—The doctors declare there is not.——

A journal! my love.—Of what is it to conſiſt?—Of fears, doubts, and uneaſy joys? Uneaſy, becauſe I cannot inſure the continuance.—Yet you ſhall be obey'd, and journal-ways as you deſire, becauſe, I think that will be the beſt method, as I have not much leiſure. I can however at night, or in the morning, give you a conciſe account of the (I fear they will prove trifling) occurrences of the paſs'd or preceding

preceding day — I will begin with thoſe of yeſterday.

Tueſday morning about two o'clock, my Lord return'd from Lady Braithwait.—He is very conſtant in his viſits to her Ladyſhip, who by all appearance is a great favourite with him — perhaps indeed the charming Wallgrove may add a little to the pleaſure he receives in her company. — I had been in bed for ſome hours — but ſleep had not yet deign'd to honour me with a viſit.— The curtains were not cloſe drawn — he came out of his dreſſing room in his night-gown and ſlippers; when, diſmiſſing his ſervant, he came up to the bedſide, the candle in his hand, to ſee, I ſuppoſe, if I was aſleep — I was not — but it came into my head to appear ſo. — He retired on tiptoe — and, ſeating himſelf at my dreſſing table, pull'd out a picture.—— Leaning his head on his arm, he examined it for a few moments with attention — then,

— then, with an air of ſatisfaction, replacing it in a ſhagreen-caſe, put it again into his waiſtcoat pocket, looking round to me, to ſee whether I ſtill continued in my imagined peaceful ſlumber — he ſoon after ſtole ſoftly into bed.

As I now wiſh'd to indulge my no very pleaſing meditations — he had given me ſufficient ſubject for them — I ſtill feign'd myſelf aſleep, and he was ſoon really ſo. — What picture could it be? — 'Twas impoſſible, I thought, that Miſs Wallgrove, on only a week or ten days acquaintance, could have made him a preſent of hers — no, that was unnatural to ſuppoſe. — Beſides, would he not have preſs'd it to his lips? would he not have placed it next his heart, inſtead of ſo unlover-like putting it careleſsly into his pocket? — whoſe then could it be? — I confeſs my weakneſs — I would have given the world to have had my curioſity ſatisfied — yet I hoped it was not, from the

the above inſtance, a very highly-valued one. —— My Lord has doubtleſs many admirers — and ſome Ladies are not very ſcrupulous. —— Who knows but an indiſcreet willing fair-one might make him a preſent not very warmly ſolicited? —— may perhaps he may deſpiſe her for her indelicate fondneſs! Such eaſy conqueſts will never rob me of his heart. —

Thus did I endeavour to paſs it on myſelf as a trifle not worthy of a ſerious thought; —— but, ſerious or not — and 'tis moſt certain they were not very gay ones —— I could not get rid of them. —— In vain I endeavour'd to compoſe myſelf to reſt. —— How I long'd for morning! — I durſt not turn nor move, for fear of diſturbing his repoſe. —— Nothing can be more uneaſy than ſuch a reſtraint, when one is inclined to be reſtleſs. —— I was abſolutely in a fever. —— At length, however, the wiſh'd-for viſitor came — and I loſt the remembrance of my care. ——

I ſlept later than uſual in the morning. — My Lord was awake when I aroſe. — I determined to take advantage of this, in order to ſatisfy my curioſity; — but, as I had been guilty of a little artifice — ah! my dear, we ſhould never on any account ſubmit to that! — I could not act with that ingenuous openneſs he had taken ſuch pains to recommend. But never more will I have recourſe to any mean deceit, however harmleſs it may appear at the time. ———

As I could not I ſay openly own I had ſeen the vile picture — ſo — but it ſhall be the laſt time — I was again obliged to uſe a little ſtratagem. — His waiſtcoat lay on a chair by the bedſide. — In pretending to look for my ſlippers (Sophy, you cannot condemn me more than I do myſelf. — Oh! that vile female curioſity! but it ſhall be the very laſt time, I tell

I tell you!) I, as if by accident, flung down the waiſtcoat, and in ſuch a manner that every thing drop'd out of its pocket.

" What are you about, Caroline?" cried my Lord haſtily, " give me thoſe " things you have flung down. — How " can you be ſo heedleſs?"—

You may gueſs what I firſt took up.— " I hope I have done no miſchief, my " Lord. There is nothing brittle in " this, is there?"

" Oh! woman! woman!" cried he; " but pray, child, open it, and ſee— " perhaps there is ſome fair Lady ſhut up " in it — pray reſtore her to liberty."

" You are ſo ſatirical, my Lord," " what have I ſaid?"— " Oh! you are " a little ſly charmer, Caroline—but ſit

" down" — taking my hand.— I placed myſelf on the bedſide.— " Is this the " way you *very* cunning Ladies take to " examine their husbands pockets? — " Now tell me, Caroline, and tell me " truely, are you not dying to know " what is in this pretty caſe? Look at it, my dear,— is it not of very neat and " curious workmanſhip? I wonder what " it contains!"——

" How can you teaze me ſo, my Lord? " —Well now, poſitively, I will ſee it—" yet I had not near ſo much deſire to do ſo as ſome time before. —His eaſy manner convinced me how unjuſtly I had ſuſpected him, and made me bluſh at my weakneſs.—

" You will!" return'd he — " you " muſt have no will but mine."

I preſs'd

I preſs'd his hand to my lips.—— " Then keep it, my dear Somerville, " whatever it be — you ſhall find I " can get the better of that female im- " pertinence."——

I took up ſome letters that had like- wiſe drop'd on the ground — " There, " my Lord, forgive the accident."——

" If," cried he ſmiling, " you will " ſwear to me that is was merely by " accident"——

" Fye, my Lord! I will not ſtay to " hear any more of your raillery."—

He put his arm round my waiſt.— " Don' t go, Caroline. " You might " think, tho' you are too diſcreet to " ſpeak. — We will have no ſecrets " between us. — I am not yet going to

" ſay to you, *Alas, my dear, I can no*
" *longer love you!* — for you and I are,
" you know, always to ſpeak our real
" ſentiments. —— But to be ſerious,"
added he — " what now will you ſay
" to me when I tell you I have in this
" little caſe a very handſome picture?"

" I would ſay, my Lord," return'd I ſmiling, " that a handſome picture
" could not be better beſtow'd than on
" your Lordſhip, who are not only a
" judge but ſo great an admirer of
" beauty."

" Sly girl!—But will you promiſe not
" to be jealous?"

" O yes, my Lord; for I know you
" deteſt a jealous wife."

" You have an excellent memory,
" my dear; but I hope you treaſure
" up the tender things I ſay to you as
" well

" well as the harſh ones — tho' the
" former," added he, " are not indeed
" quite ſo frequent; they will however
" be the eaſier remember'd — but
" come, now for the important diſcove-
" ry; rub your eyes. I wiſh you had
" our good mother's ſpectacles, that you
" might ſee the clearer. I would not
" for the world any of its beauties
" ſhould eſcape your notice."——

He open'd the caſe. — Judge of my ſurprize, Sophy, when I ſaw in it not a formidable rival, but the innocent reſemblance of a gentleman — a handſome man indeed, but not a handſome female.

" There, Caroline," cried my Lord, laughing, " is it not a perfect Adonis?
" Look well at it; there is a beard.
" 'Tis no Amazon, no fair creature,
" whom love has tempted to put on

" this diſguiſe. — Come, come," added he, " don't examine it ſo delightedly " neither — or, inſtead of giving you " a rival, I ſhall be in danger of finding " one. —— But go, my dear, you may " get cold in that thin diſhabille.—Now " I have ſatisfied your curioſity, I hope " you will truſt me for the future. " Never more let me find you dare to " ſuſpect my conſtancy."——

I was going to ſpeak — but he ſtop'd me.—" None of your pretty profeſſions. " I will ſuppoſe all you would ſay on " the occaſion."—He turn'd from me—, adding, " I believe I ſhall indulge my " lazineſs an hour or two longer. Don't " wait breakfaſt."——

I retired to my dreſſing room, praiſing Heaven that this (late to me ſo ſerious) affair had ended ſo gaily. — Adieu,

my

my dear; I hear my Lord going down ſtairs. I muſt attend him. —— Oh! Sophy, I eſteem myſelf at this moment the happieſt of my ſex — nor can I, will I, doubt its continuance.

Saturday.

This morning I received the following note from Miſs Wallgrove.

" WILL my dear Lady Somer-
" ville give her Charlotte leave
" to paſs the day with her? —We are,
" you know, to viſit without ceremony.
" — I ſhall bring my work — for a
" damſel of faſhion, I am tolerably no-
" table. — You, my dear Madam, are,
" as I am told, remarkable for that kind
" of ingenuity. — I muſt ſee your per-
" formances, and you muſt give me your

" opinion of mine. What I am at pre-
" ſent employ'd in is a pair of ruffles, and
" for a gentle man too.—Oho! you cry.
" —Patience, my dear — you ſhall
" know all my very important ſecrets.
" —But only think of your Lord and
" Maſter! —The gay wretch has ſtolen
" one of them, and ſwears he will not
" return it till I have work'd him the
" fellow to them. — Very free and eaſy,
" you will confeſs! — you muſt help me
" to get it from him. — Shall I come?
" ſhall I be welcome? — We will ſhut
" the door againſt all impertinence but
" your Somerville; him we will admit
" for an hour or two, by way of a little
" variety, tho' our dear *tête à tête* will
" be ſtill more agreeable to your

" CHARLOTTE W."

You

You may guess what answer I return'd. I am quite charm'd with this lively and agreeable creature—nor doubt I but my admiration will soon be improved to friendship. — You find she has a lover — that indeed is nothing, for I make no question she must have half a hundred — but he appears to be a favour'd one — that, I own, is a circumstance at which I cannot help being pleased. We shall indeed have a long *tête à tête*, and without the variety she mentions — for my Lord told me last night he was engaged to dine abroad.—A rap at the door — 'tis her — I hear her tripping up stairs. —— Adieu.

Saturday, 8 *o'clock*.

As my Lord is not yet come home, I, finding no inclination to sleep, sit down to give my Sophy some particulars of the

paſt day. — Miſs Wallgrove, who is a moſt engaging creature, came early. — I was in my dreſſing room — ſhe choſe to continue there — ſhe made me ſhew her my work, my drawings, &c. &c. — obligingly praiſing them all.

" Well may my Lord doat on you,
" as he does," ſaid ſhe. " Dear Lady
" Somerville, you are a happy woman—
" but no none ever more juſtly deſerved
" to be ſo."

" I hope," return'd I, " my charm-
" ing Miſs Wallgrove will be no leſs ſo,
" when ſhe condeſcends to bleſs ſome
" deſerving lover with her hand."

" Ah, Lord! my dear," ſighing,
" that will never be."

I ſmiled —— "A ſtrange reſolution, "indeed, my dear! but I fancy it does "not amount to that."

"Alas! my dear Lady Somerville, I "am convinced I am not born to be "happy — ſome unlucky planet ruled "at my birth."

"Dear creature, what reaſon on earth "have you to think ſo?—young, beauti- "ful, rich, well born, and uncontroul- "ed miſtreſs of yourſelf and fortune?"

"Ah! no, Madam — not miſtreſs "of myſelf, there's the misfortune."

"Nay, my dear, but you muſt at leaſt "be ſo when of age."

"I much queſtion it," returned ſhe, ſhaking her head. ——

" Come," resumed I, " you do not " take out your work. I'll lay my life " your happy lover, presuming perhaps " too much on your kind indulgence, " has done something to displease you. " — I am to be intrusted with all your " secrets, you know."

" Did I promise you that?" cried she, smiling.—" Ah! would to Heaven! " but the happy lover, as you are plea- " sed to call him, has done nothing " either to please or displease me—it " is not in his power — here are the " ruffles, or rather the ruffle."

I looked at it.—" It is extremely " pretty." — I bestow'd many just encomiums on her ingenuity.

" They are well enough — but I be- " lieve I shall never finish them."

" Cruel!"

" Cruel!" ſaid I, " come, let me " plead for the unfortunate delinquent— " tho' unknown to me, I will take up- " on me to be his advocate — but you " muſt tell me his crime. —Did I ever ſee " him? — Is it the gay Lord D——, " or Sir William W —— ? But to enu- " merate all your admirers would be an " endleſs task. Come, tell me, and " ſave me the trouble." —— " You " want," returned ſhe, " to know who " theſe ruffles are intended for. He is " indeed my lover — but I feel now I " can never return his love. — You muſt " know, my dear Madam, that, when " in France with my poor mama — " Oh! why did Heaven, at a time when " I ſo much ſtood in need of it, deprive " me of the advice and protection of " that tender parent? —while we were " in France, I became acquainted with

a young

" a young gentleman, Sir Harry Villiers,
" who was there on his grand tour, as it
" is call'd. Mama knew his family.—
" I thought his company agreeable. He
" is reckoned handſome — ſome Ladies
" think him remarkably ſo — it muſt
" be confeſs'd, he is, upon the whole,
" more than barely paſſable. —— After
" a few viſits, he declared himſelf my
" lover—my affections were intirely diſ-
" engaged—I heard his declaration with-
" out either pain or pleaſure.— Mama,
" ſenſible that her end was approach-
" ing, wiſh'd to ſee me married before
" her death— and, as ſhe had a high
" opinion of the young man, thought ſhe
" could not chuſe me a more honourable
" protector. — She therefore encourag-
" ed his ſuit, and, for her ſake, I liſten'd
" to him with more complacency;—yet
" ſtill I felt nothing like love —but, as

" I had

" I had a great eſteem for him, I miſtook
" that; ignorant as I then was, for a
" warmer paſſion.—Ah! they are widely
" different! — Mean time my mother's
" illneſs increaſed — that was no time
" to think of love — ſhe engroſs'd my
" whole attention.—In vain ſhe preſs'd
" me to conclude my marriage—I would
" not hear of it, while I ſaw her in that
" condition. —— She died." —— Miſs Wallgrove pauſed, and wiped her eyes. — " Sir Harry omited no endeavours
" to conſole me for my irreparable loſs.
" — I determined to return to England
" — he preſs'd to accompany me, — I
" would not conſent. —— He then en-
" deavour'd to obtain a promiſe from
" me that I would be his — for he de-
" termined to follow me. — This too
" I peremptorily refuſed —— nay, I
" charged him, if ever he hoped for my
" favour, or the continuance of my
" eſteem,

" eſteem, not to think of returning to
" England till he had compleated his
" travels. I will put your conſtancy to
" the proof, ſaid I ſmiling, —— for I
" muſt, ere I beſtow my hand, be well
" aſſured that I am really loved. — We
" parted. — He, by his importunity,
" obtained my permiſſion to write to me.
" — He forced my picture from me —
" it had been my dear mama's. — He,
" in return, made me accept of ——"
Here ſhe pauſed, bluſh'd, and appear'd in
ſome confuſion. — " What was I ſaying?"
reſumed ſhe — " 'tis a confuſed kind of
" narrative — but indeed it cannot be
" intereſting to you — and I aſſure you
" 'tis very little ſo to myſelf. — In ſhort,
" we parted — but he ſtill peſters me
" with letters, tho' I am now poſitively
" determined never to be his — yet he
" has brought me into a ſort of entangle-
" ment, from which I know not rightly

" how

" how to extricate myſelf. — I never
" poſitively made any promiſe of marri-
" age, nor can I conceive myſelf in any
" ſenſe engaged to him. — All I have
" to reproach myſelf with is ever having
" given him the ſlighteſt foundation for
" hope.—It was, however, a very ſlight
" one.—This," purſued ſhe, "is a faint
" ſketch of my hiſtory — and this the
" happy man, as you are pleaſed to call
" him, for whom, when abroad, I began
" theſe ruffles.——There, child, have
" I not kept my word?"

I expreſs'd my gratitude for her o-bliging frankneſs.——But, my deareſt Sophy, why, when on the ſubject of her picture, did ſhe bluſh?—why, when ſhe ſaid "he in return would make me accept
" of —" did ſhe pauſe?—It raiſed in me a ſtrange ſort of momentary ſuſpicion — don't accuſe me of jealouſy — but I could

could not help, in order to ſatisfy my curioſity, aſking a deſcription of this Villiers. — Would you believe it, my dear? it abſolutely exactly anſwered — or perhaps my imagination impoſed upon my judgement — trifles light as air — ah! let me beware, — an oval face, blue eyes, light hair — but are there not a thouſand men whom this deſcription would anſwer? — A thouſand pictures might be drawn in that manner — and yet be very unlike Sir Harry. —Begone, then, ye unjuſt doubts and fears! Miſs Wallgrove is a woman of rank — that is ſaying but little — yet is ſhe not likewiſe a woman of virtue? —No—! it is impoſſible — I bluſh that, tho' but for a moment I ſhould have indulged this faulty weakneſs.

In return for her confidence, ſhe begg'd I would favour her with ſome particulars of my hiſtory — ſhe had received

ceived an imperfect account from Lady Braithwait, with which ſhe was but half ſatisfied —— "convinced," ſhe was pleaſed to ſay, "that ſhe had "not done me all the juſtice I "merited."

I complied —— ſhe appear'd affected at ſome parts of my narrative —— "Oh! my dear Lady Somerville, how "much have you ſuffer'd!" adding with fervor, "but you are now amply re- "warded."

When I related my converſation with the late Lord B——, "Cruel man!" ſaid ſhe, — "but could he, "do you think, have annull'd your "marriage?—— Thank Heaven, his "ſon is of a juſter way of thinking."

She embraced me.—"Now, my dear, "ſend for your little Caroline, to com- "plete

" plete the pleaſure I have already re-
" ceived from this agreeable viſit."

While the ſervant was gone for the child, I gave her a ſlight ſketch of my plan of education. — She obligingly approved of it. —— " I ſhall take care," cried ſhe, ſmiling, " how I praiſe her " to her face—but I muſt tell you, that I " think her the ſweeteſt creature I ever " beheld. She has my Lord's eyes, and " your lovely little dimpled mouth."

Sally entered while ſhe ſpoke, the child in her hand. ——Miſs Wallgrove ſeated her on her lap——and gazed on her with inexpreſſible fondneſs.—Would you believe it?—my faithful girl ſeemed to envy her the pleaſure of careſſing her lovely charge. ——She looked diſ-

pleaſed

pleaſed—I fancy Miſs Wallgrove is no favourite of her's——yet I wonder ſhe ſhould not —— for nobody behaves with more amiable condeſcenſion to her inferiors——and, though her perſon is graceful, there is nothing either haughty or aſſuming in her carriage.

We were ſummoned to dinner—the child diſmiſſed, and we ſet down to table——when behold, juſt as we had finiſhed our repaſt, in came his Lordſhip.—I was a little fluttered at his unlooked-for appearance.—" You did not " expect me, Caroline," —— ſaid he, ſmiling — " but, tho' not an expected, " I hope, nevertheleſs, I am not an un- " welcome gueſt—though, to ſay truth, " I ſhould not be ſurprized were you " diſpleaſed at any perſon, be he " who

" who he will, that came to interrupt a " *tête à tête* ſo agreeable, which muſt " give you pleaſure that can admit of " no addition.—The friends I was en- " gaged to ſent me an apology—and " I, well pleaſed, returned home to " the company of her I greatly prefer " to theirs.——Little did I imagine my " happineſs would be thus angmented " by that of the charming Miſs Wall- " grove."

" Very gallant!" ſaid ſhe, ſmiling; " but come, take your ſeat, my Lord; " for I preſume, though we may like " well enough to have our vanity fed " with compliments, your Lordſhip " would have no objections to food a " little more ſubſtantial."

I or-

I ordered the ſervants to bring in ſome of the diſhes they had juſt carried out—and expreſſed my ſorrow that he had not come ſooner.—" A mere trifle!" ſaid he—" You know I am no Epicure, " —the pleaſures of the table are not " thoſe on which I ſet moſt value."

He was extremely lively and good-humoured. I think I never ſaw him ſo agreeably entertaining.—Miſs Wallgrove ſeemed to be of the ſame opinion—yet now and then ſhe appeared abſent and thoughtful—I fear, my dear Sophy, ſhe is not happy—and I fear too ſhe has not made me her unlimited confident.—Indeed I have no title to expect it, on only a few weeks acquaintance.—I had given orders to be denied to all other company—but, on ſeeing Miſs Anſtruther's carriage,

carriage, as I ſtood at the window, I haſtily countermanded them, leſt I ſhould give offence to the teſty virgin, who might hear that Miſs Wallgrove was with me.

" Ah! there is an end of our happi-
" neſs," ſaid that amiable girl—" this
" is the very worſt impertinent that
" could have broke in upon us."

" There is nothing for it but flight,"
cried my Lord, ſnatching up his hat—
adding ſomething in a low voice to Miſs
Wallgrove—and, paying his reſpects *en paſſant* to his couſin, hurried down ſtairs, and out of the houſe.

The Lady entered.—" What! Miſs
" Wallgrove here!" cried ſhe, " and

" my Lord going out? that is extraor-
" dinary indeed."

" My Lord," returned that young Lady, a little nettled, as I could ſee, " is extremely polite—but, if you, Ma-
" dam, could not detain him, I ſee no
" reaſon I have to expect that compli-
" ment."

" May be ſo!" ſaid the other, dryly.

" What a cenſorious creature is an
" old maid!" whiſpered Miſs Wall-grove.—" Cenſorious!" my dear Sophy! —what did ſhe mean? I proteſt I ſhould not have took what ſhe ſaid in that light, had ſhe not ſo explained it.

We took our ſeats.—Miſs Anſtruther told me ſhe came on purpoſe to bring me the little Paſtoral I appeared ſo pleaſed with, and of which I ſeemed ſo deſirous to have a copy—Did I, Sophy?—'Tis more than I ſhould have gueſſed, had not the good Lady told me ſo.—I received it, however, with all imaginable complaiſance.

She begged I would read it——I ſhould find it greatly improved—and much more perfect than when I laſt ſaw it.—"With your leave, Madam," anſwered I, "I will do it more at my leiſure, that none of its beauties may "eſcape my notice."

"You are really, Lady Somerville," ſaid ſhe, delighted with my compliment,

"a

" a very agreeable woman, and have a
" pretty notion of poetry.——Did you
" ever try your talent in that way?—'Tis
" a divine ſcience!—But 'tis born with
" one—not to be acquired!——

" I liſp'd in numbers—for the numbers
" came."

I will not tire you with a repetition of all ſhe ſaid on this her favourite ſubject. ——That would indeed be a taſk.—— Miſs Wallgrove at laſt, heartily weary of her impertinence, took leave.—Preſſing my hand, " Dear Lady Somerville—my
" friend, let me rather call you—do not
" be long ere you return my viſit. I
" have ſtill a thouſand things to ſay to
" you.—You are going," added ſhe, in a whiſper, " to hear a great deal of

" ſcandal, I make no doubt.—That, next " to poetry, is Miſs Anſtruther's topic."

" Tireſome as the former is," re- " turned I, I ſhall yet greatly prefer it " to the latter.—She will not, I promiſe " you, have a very attentive auditor."

" Of that I am well aſſured—" ſaid ſhe, again preſſing my hand—" Adieu, my " dear creature.—Oh! that vile, ever- " laſting old woman, what brought her " here, I wonder, to break up our agree- " able party?"

Away ſhe trip'd.—" What a conceited " flirt is that?" cried Miſs Anſtruther.

" Conceited! my dear Madam?" re- peated I—" nobody, in my opinion, ſo " little deſerves that cenſure."

" Oh!

" Oh! you don't know her."

" But ſurely Lady Braithwait does," returned I—" and ſhe, you muſt own, " has the higheſt idea of her merit."

" Lady Braithwait, in ſome reſpects, " is a good ſenſible kind of a body—but " ſhe has no more idea of an accom- " pliſhed woman than ſhe has of the " tranſcendent beauties of poetry—Miſs " Wallgrove is neither better nor worſe " than are almoſt all the Ladies of the " preſent degenerate age. There are, " indeed, ſome few exceptions"—and ſhe held up her head, leſt I ſhould neglect to include her in the number.—— " To be ſure, it cannot be ſuppoſed I " ſhould know any thing of the laſt—— " but, by what I have read, I find it

" grows worſe every day we live.—Ah!
" can we now boaſt of poets like the
" antients?"

" Why, are not you a poet, Madam?"
ſaid I, a little archly. —— " True, my
" dear; but, if I have any excellency
" above others, it is by ſo cloſely copy-
" ing thoſe divine originals.—You are
" really, Lady Somerville," continued
ſhe, " a perſon of ſome judgement—and,
" as I ſhall always prefer ſenſe to birth,
" ſo, regarding you in that light, I
" (whatever ſome of my family may be)
" am pleaſed that my couſin has given
" me a relation ſo agreeable——Theirs
" is a ſtupid unclaſſical pride.—Genius
" is the only thing that can warrant
" that (in every thing elſe odious) paſſion.
" —My conſequence does not depend
" on

" on my riches, or high birth (though
" few have a more illuſtrious one to
" boaſt of), but on my ſuperior talents.
" —Penetration is amongſt that num-
" ber. —— I tell you once more, Miſs
" Wallgrove—with all her affected de-
" mureneſs—is an arrant coquette in her
" heart—and ſo you would have ſaid,
" had you ſeen her flirting airs the other
" night, when in company with your
" huſband."

" With my huſband, Madam!"

" Yes, with your huſband, child;
" you don't know, perhaps, that he is
" not famed for conſtancy.—Before he
" married you, he was not only a ge-
" neral admirer, but as generally ad-
" mired—Oh! theſe men, Lady Somer-

" ville—what do you think?—it is but
" my thorough knowledge of them that
" has kept me ſo long ſingle—not that
" it is ſo very long neither—though in-
" deed I might have been married ere I
" was well out of my leading-ſtrings—
" but the poet warned me to beware—
" for—Truſt not a man, ſays he, we are
" by nature falſe.—And I ſay, Truſt not
" Miſs Wallgrove, for ſhe is not a friend
" that a diſcreet wife would chuſe.—
" Take Ovid's advice on a ſimilar occa-
" ſion——

" Ne'er keep a ſervant with too fair a
" face,
" For thoſe have oft ſupply'd their
" Lady's place.

" Equally imprudent is it to keep too
" handſome acquaintances—not, indeed,
" that

" that Miſs Wallgrove is ſo VERY hand-
" ſome—but any thing is cried up now-
" a-days—I remember the time—that
" is to ſay, I have read of——" She ſtop'd ſhort.

" I am much obliged to you, dear
" Madam," returned I, " for your kind,
" and I believe well-meant advice—but
" I have no doubt of my Lord's tender-
" neſs and honour. Equally confident
" am I of Miſs Wallgrove's prudence
" and virtue——and as to not chuſing
" handſome people for my acquaintance,
" —if not at home, my huſband would
" ſee fine women abroad—and perhaps
" think them more ſo, for being leſs
" accuſtomed to meet with them. On
" the contrary, I take a pleaſure in ren-
" dering that home as agreeable as poſ-

" ſible, by chuſing ſuch company as I " think will be moſt ſuited to his taſte. " —I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf, could I in- " dulge any of that mean envy which " cannot bear a rival in beauty——I do " not expect to retain his affections " merely by the charms of my perſon— " but by endeavouring to inſure his " eſteem.—He may—nay muſt—meet " with a thouſand finer women—but, I " hope, with none more virtuous, none " that will ſet a higher value on his " heart.—It ſhall be my ſtudy faithfully " to diſcharge my duty—the reſt I leave " to Heaven."

I turned from her, and wiped my eyes, for I could not help being affected on a ſubject ſo melancholy——though I am-

am determined not to make myſelf uneaſy at what ſhe ſays, ſince it proceeds only perhaps from her natural propenſity to ſcandal——yet, at the time, I did not liſten to her without emotion.

" You may do as you pleaſe, Lady " Somerville," reſumed ſhe—" what I " ſay is entirely out of friendſhip—but " for what now, I wonder, does my " Lord pay ſuch frequent viſits to his " aunt? I remember the time when ſhe " was not ſo much in favour—and ſure " am I, that, though in ſome things a " woman of tolerable ſenſe, yet is there " nothing ſo very agreeable in her con- " verſation, as to pleaſe a man of his " Lordſhip's taſte—— and that he has

" ſome, all the world allows, though " not quite ſo enamoured with the " beauties of poetry as I could wiſh.— " But now, go to Lady Braithwait's " when you will, there is his Lordſhip " —I called in one day laſt week——. " there was he.—Laſt night, there was " he.—This morning——"

" This morning!" interrupted I.

" Yes, this very morning—there ſat " he, flirting away with that conceited " minx—I have no patience with her. " She thinks nobody has any pretenſions " to beauty but herſelf—and yet ſome " people's charms have been both ſaid " and ſung, as well as her conceited Lady- " ſhip's—nay, I queſtion if ſhe ever had

" a

" a copy of verſes made on her in her
" life.—Some day or other, my dear,"
continued ſhe, " though I fear you
" would think me vain were I to ſhew
" you all I have had wrote on me——
" but only think of Lady Braithwait's
" ſtupidity—— ſo little does ſhe under-
" ſtand of poetry, that, when I read a
" copy of them to her, ſhe abſolutely
" miſtook it for a lampoon—not to know
" a panegyric from a lampoon!——my
" ſtars! what ignorance!——But you
" don't tell me what you think of my
" Lord's frequent viſits," ran ſhe on.

" I think," returned I, ſmiling, " that
" they are agreeable to him—and, I
" aſſure you, whatever is ſo to him,
" will ever be ſo to me.——I believe,"

added

added I, with a more ſerious air, " you " tell me theſe things out of friendſhip " — but I muſt beg, as a much more " acceptable inſtance of it, that you " will never for the future, in my pre- " ſence, cenſure his conduct. —— You " ſhould remember," continued I, re- ſuming a ſmile, " that man and wife " are one, and you cannot find fault " with——"

" So then," interrupted ſhe, warmly, " you are to be accountable for your " huſband's conduct! —— Fine doctrine " truely!"

" I fear too many wives will, in that " reſpect, have a great deal to anſwer " for," returned I — " but we will at " leaſt,

" leaſt, if you pleaſe, leave my Lord to " anſwer for his own, and to govern it " as he thinks proper."

" Very well, Ma'am," ſcrewing up her mouth—" I have no more to ſay— " it muſt be owned, you are a very du- " tiful and wonderfully obedient wife," drawling out her words.

" I deſire at leaſt to be ſo," ſaid I. —I ſaw ſhe was not pleaſed with me, though ſhe did not openly expreſs any reſentment—and, to my great joy, ſoon after took leave.

Dear Sophy, there never was ſo tedious a viſit.—I fear I have intolerably wearied you with the deſcription of it.

—But

—But pardon me—yet it is your own fault—you would have a journal—and you ſee of what trifles it is likely to conſiſt.

A note is this moment brought me from my Lord. Let us ſee the contents.

" My

" My dear CAROLINE,

" That eternal gameſter Lady Braith-
" wait has got hold of me again—there
" is no getting away from her——the
" card-tables are ſet out—hardly would
" ſhe allow me time to write theſe two
" lines to my deareſt, which are only
" to inform ~~you~~, that I cannot ſup at
" home——but I ſhall take care how I
" engage with this good aunt for the
" future—ſhe wins all my money.——
" Adieu,

" My beſt love,

" Ever your

" SOMERVILLE.

" Thy

"Thy beſt love!"—Ah! my Somerville, but not, I fear, thy only love!—Beſt, perhaps, but not moſt beautiful.—Heighho!—ſo you find, Sophy, I am not likely to be honoured with much of his company—Oh! this vile town!——How much happier was I at D——!—my Lord, my dear huſband, was then all my own.—I am very low-ſpirited.—Would you were here, my friend, to raiſe them by your amiable vivacity!—I cannot forget one thing, which Miſs Anſtruther mentioned.—He was at Lady Braithwait's this morning, you find——yet (oh! theſe ſly men!) he pretended not to know that Miſs Wallgrove was to ſpend the day with me.——He came home unexpectedly——his friends had broke their engagement——all very plauſible, to be ſure!—But what am I doing?

doing?—Jealouſy, begone.—Now will I go to bed—to ſleep, I was going to ſay. Ah! no—I could ſit down, and tell ſad tales, or weep—or compoſe mournful elegies, or any other fooliſh thing that ſorrow prompts to——but I will do the firſt only, that is, go to bed——and ſo good night, my Sophy;——may your ſlumbers be ſweeter than thoſe of

Your poor

CAROLINE.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

48085

FOR REFERENCE

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM